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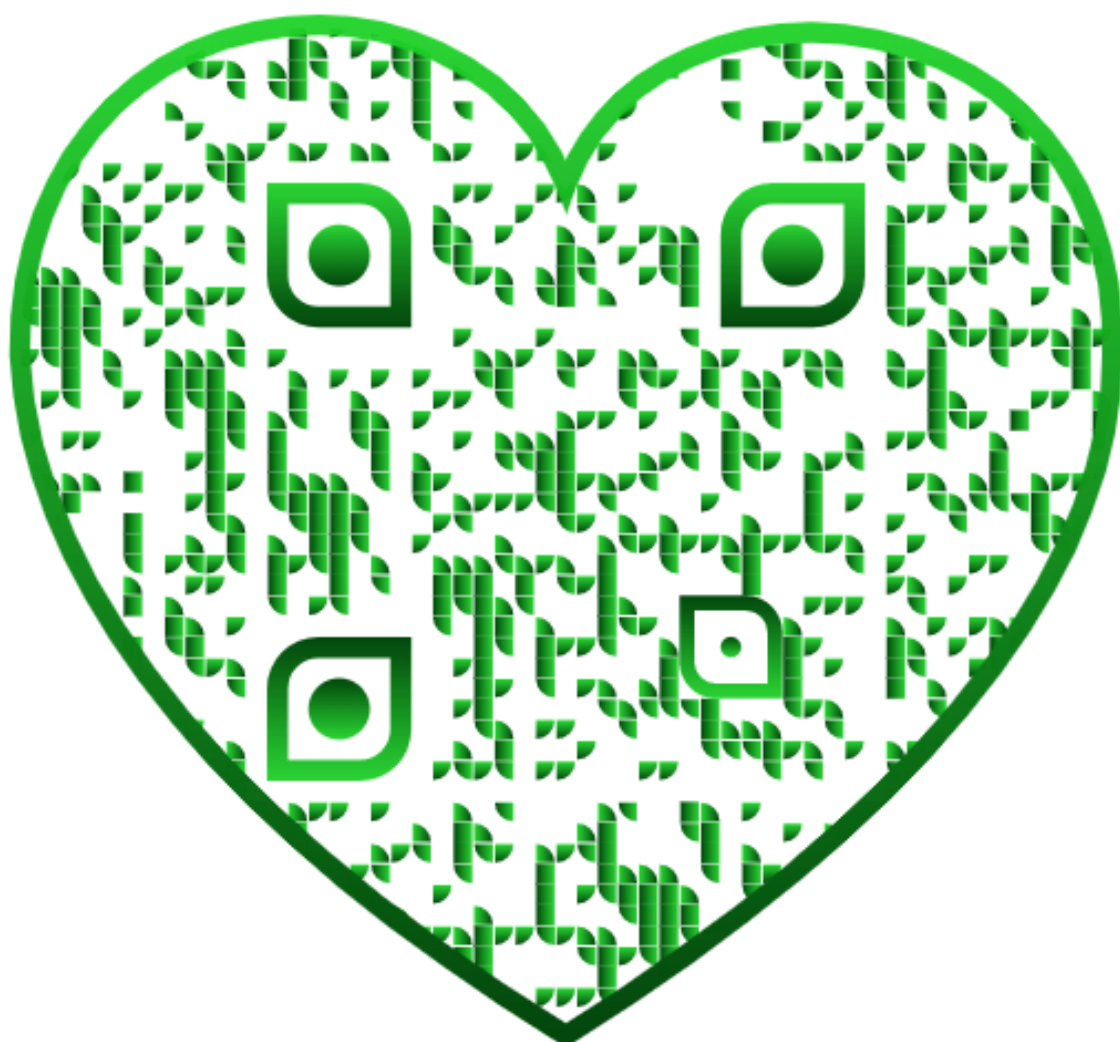
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Welcome

Planning reform is, we're told, at the heart of this government's plans to dramatically increase housebuilding levels in the UK and deliver 1.5 million new homes by the end of this Parliament. A full year in, and relatively little has changed, but consultations aplenty rumble on! A number of these do show some promise, including the working paper on reforming site thresholds. Fundamentally, this is about streamlining some of the more onerous planning requirements that currently apply to smaller sites. This could help level the playing field for individuals and SME builders creating quality homes tailored to the local area, rather than subjecting them to the costly red tape big developers can absorb when delivering 1,000s of units at a tidy profit.

There are good noises being made about retaining existing exemptions on the likes of affordable housing contributions (which can amount to £10,000s) and bringing planning decision timescales closer to the statutory eight-week period. But some of the initial proposals need interrogation. Given many planning departments are under-resourced, the suggestion all schemes of fewer than 10 homes be delegated to planning officers could end up slowing decisions down rather than speeding them up – plus it closes the door on the potential for favourable committee decisions. There's also a proposal to create template design codes for different types and size of site, including those under 0.1 hectare (prime self build land), with a view to enabling faster planning processes. Design codes can work in the right context – namely when created by skilled professionals to the benefit of both the locale and the development – but I'm not convinced a nationally set, paint by numbers approach will help deliver better quality and diversity in the housing market. The devil, inevitably, will be in the detail.

Chris

CHRIS BATESMITH, CONTENT DIRECTOR



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MEET THE TEAM

SANDER TEL is Build It's digital features editor. As well as creating great content on Self-build.co.uk, this issue he's assembled a selection of annexe designs to inspire you (page 18).



SCARLETT DEAMER is Build It's editorial assistant. From page 9, she's sourcing the latest news, products and materials. On page 66, she looks at the benefits of offsite construction.

KATE SANDHU is a renovation expert, with a deep knowledge of project management. This month, she explains the ins, outs and costs of updating or relocating your staircase (page 56).



MARK STEVENSON is a project manager with years of experience in the construction industry, and is the current chair of NaCSBA. Put your build queries to him at the next Build It Live show.

OPINDER LIDDAR is a Build It Award-winning architect, director of Lapd Architects and a regular expert at Build It Live. On page 98, he looks at how to design and specify cladding.



JULIA RIDDLE is a planning consultant with a wealth of experience in self and custom building, and a regular at Build It Live. Read her advice on planning and plots at self-build.co.uk/julia

ALAN TIERNEY is a historic buildings expert and conservation specialist, and recently finished his own listed building renovation. On page 61, he looks at how to make older houses fit for the future.



MARTIN GAINE is a former council case officer turned independent planning consultant. On page 74, he reveals why planning policy differs across councils, and how it can affect your build.

NIGEL GRIFFITHS is Build It's sustainability expert, specialising in eco homes and renewable energy. See page 104 for his guide to home battery systems, and whether they're worth the investment.



Supporting responsible forestry
As part of our sustainability commitments, Build It magazine is made of material from well-managed forests and other controlled sources.

COVER IMAGE: MAP ARCHITECTURE'S MODERNISATION OF A 1980s SEGAL BUILD PRIORITISES AIR QUALITY (SEE PAGE 52). PHOTO: TARAN WILKHU

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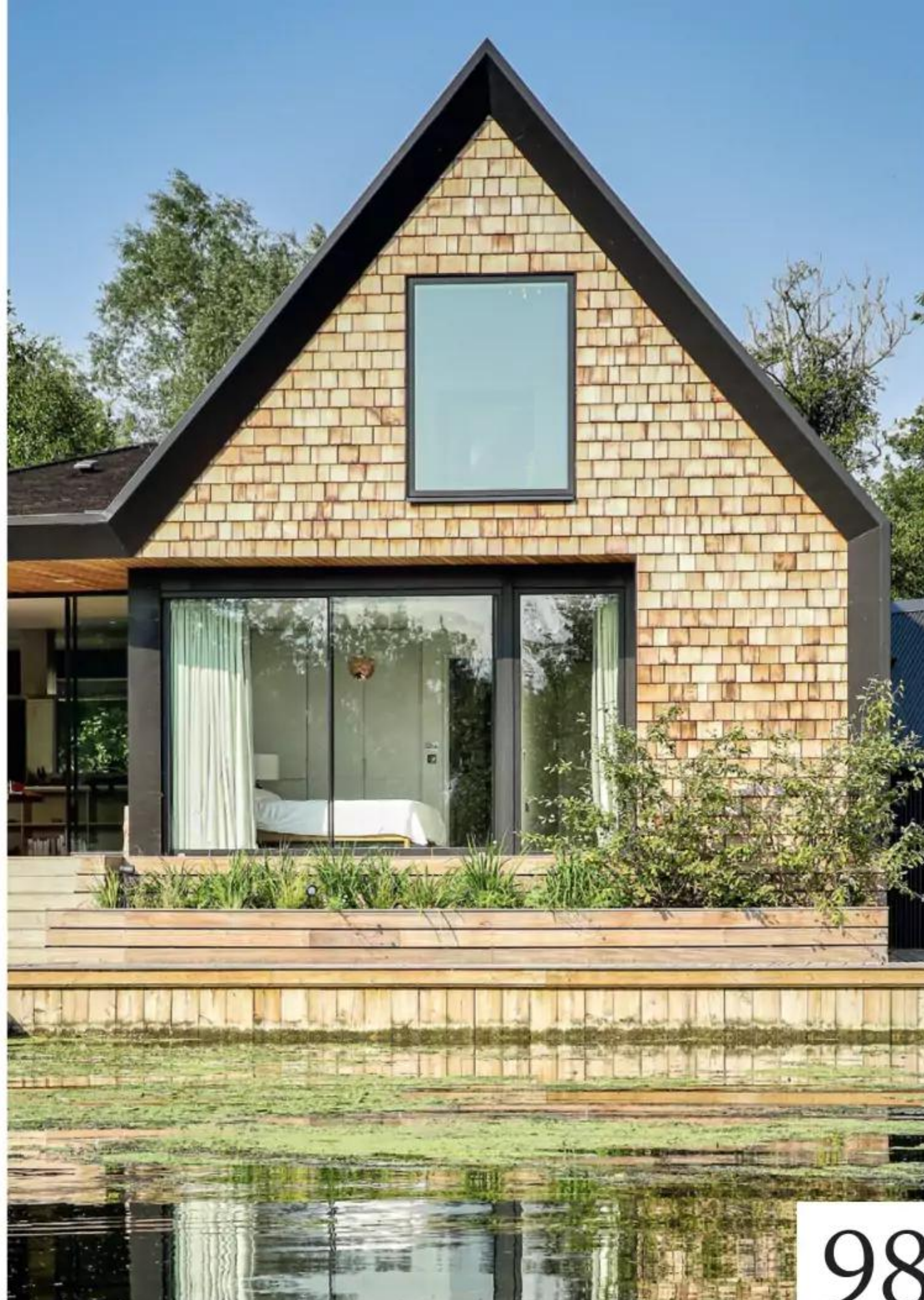
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James Brindley shares his expertise on how to design a flexible new home that can fulfill your long-term requirements



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inspiration



Serene nature-inspired home

Designed by RX Architects, Holmwood Farm is located within the High Weald National Landscape. What was once a run-down 1980s red brick chalet bungalow has been thoughtfully transformed into a contemporary, open-plan family home. The main structure was in good enough condition to reuse and update, making a revamp more cost-effective than starting a build from scratch.

To maximise space and natural light levels, large flat-roof dormers were added to the existing roof, creating generous living areas. The internal layout was also reconfigured to provide flexible zones that are able to adapt to the family's changing needs over time.

The master bedroom includes a mezzanine with a cosy snug above and an ensuite bathroom and dressing room

located below. A striking recessed glazed gable frames the glorious garden views, in turn creating a seamless connection from the home to the tranquil surroundings.

Designed with efficiency and environmental impact in mind, extra insulation has been fitted behind the re-clad elevations to reduce energy demand. Solar panels and heat pumps deliver efficient power and heat, reducing running costs and the property's in-use carbon footprint.

Externally, the building features rich, charred timber cladding paired with a complementary standing seam zinc roof. High-performance glazing supports the structure's thermal efficiency, while a beautiful natural swimming pool doubles as an attractive addition for the local wildlife, improving the site's biodiversity.

To find out more call 01797 330198 or visit rxarchitects.com

PROJECT OF THE MONTH

Newton Park Place

by Roar Architects

The design of this oak-framed extension to a Victorian home in Chislehurst was driven by the client's desire to bring in more natural light. Roar Architects rejected a conventional open-plan approach in favour of creating clearly defined zones: a spacious kitchen and dining area paired with a separate, more intimate and private living room.

Exposed oak joists and soffits introduce natural warmth and texture, forming a prominent architectural feature. A large skylight and picture window flood the dining area with sunshine, drawing light deep into the floorplan. At the centre of the new space, a dramatic 3m deep spiral wine cellar, crafted from engineered limestone concrete, adds both visual interest and practical storage.

At the rear, a 4m-wide span of bifold glazed panels open onto the garden, with an integrated window seat that offers a quiet place to sit while enjoying the tranquil outdoor views. This blurring of exterior and interior is mirrored in the exposed joists that extend into an oak pergola, providing both privacy and solar protection.

Solar panels were discreetly integrated into the roof to support energy efficiency, while a green roof enhances biodiversity and softens the structure's profile.



For more information call 020 8080 2055 or visit roar-architects.com

Growth in UK housebuilding

June 2025 brought a welcome increase in housebuilding, with activity rising in the UK for the first time since September 2024. While the broader construction sector is still facing a series of challenges, the boost in residential work is a very promising sign for self builders and the bespoke home sector. Meanwhile, house price growth has seen a slight decline in the wake of April's rise in stamp duty, but it still stands at 2.1% year-on-year, reflecting general market positivity.

22%

is the percentage increase in solar panel installations in homes across the UK for the first half of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024. iChoosr, a leader in renewable energy analysis, revealed that over 99,500 systems were installed in just six months. But that's not all – renewable energy use is also up by 18% overall. This includes heat pumps, battery storage, and, of course, solar PV panels, showing that the UK is making strides in adopting clean energy solutions.

Late 2025 for Future Homes Standard

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has confirmed that the Future Homes Standard (FHS) will be published this Autumn, prefaced by the introduction of the new Home Energy Model (which replaces SAP assessments). There will be a period for the legislative process and transition, so the new regulations may not take full effect until late 2026/2027. Nevertheless, a roadmap is emerging to at least start providing the industry and consumers with some clarity and certainty.

What's on?

HEAT & ENERGY WORKSHOP

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nsbr.co.uk

BASIC PLUMBING

12TH AUG
£60, SURREY

Learn how to repair common plumbing problems and save money on routine tasks.

greatbritishwoodshop.co.uk

INTRODUCTION TO GARDENING

30TH AUG
£85, LONDON

Discover the ins-and-outs of creating an eco-friendly garden on your new build plot or existing outdoor space.

walworthgarden.org.uk

PLANNING APPROVED?

2ND SEPT
£40, VIRTUAL

Self build expert Mark Stevenson walks you through the key steps forward after gaining planning permission.

buildit.co.uk/training

DIY & HOME MAINTENANCE

3RD-4TH SEPT
£250, CROYDON

Learn the basic skills to help you take on home improvement tasks with this practical two-day course.

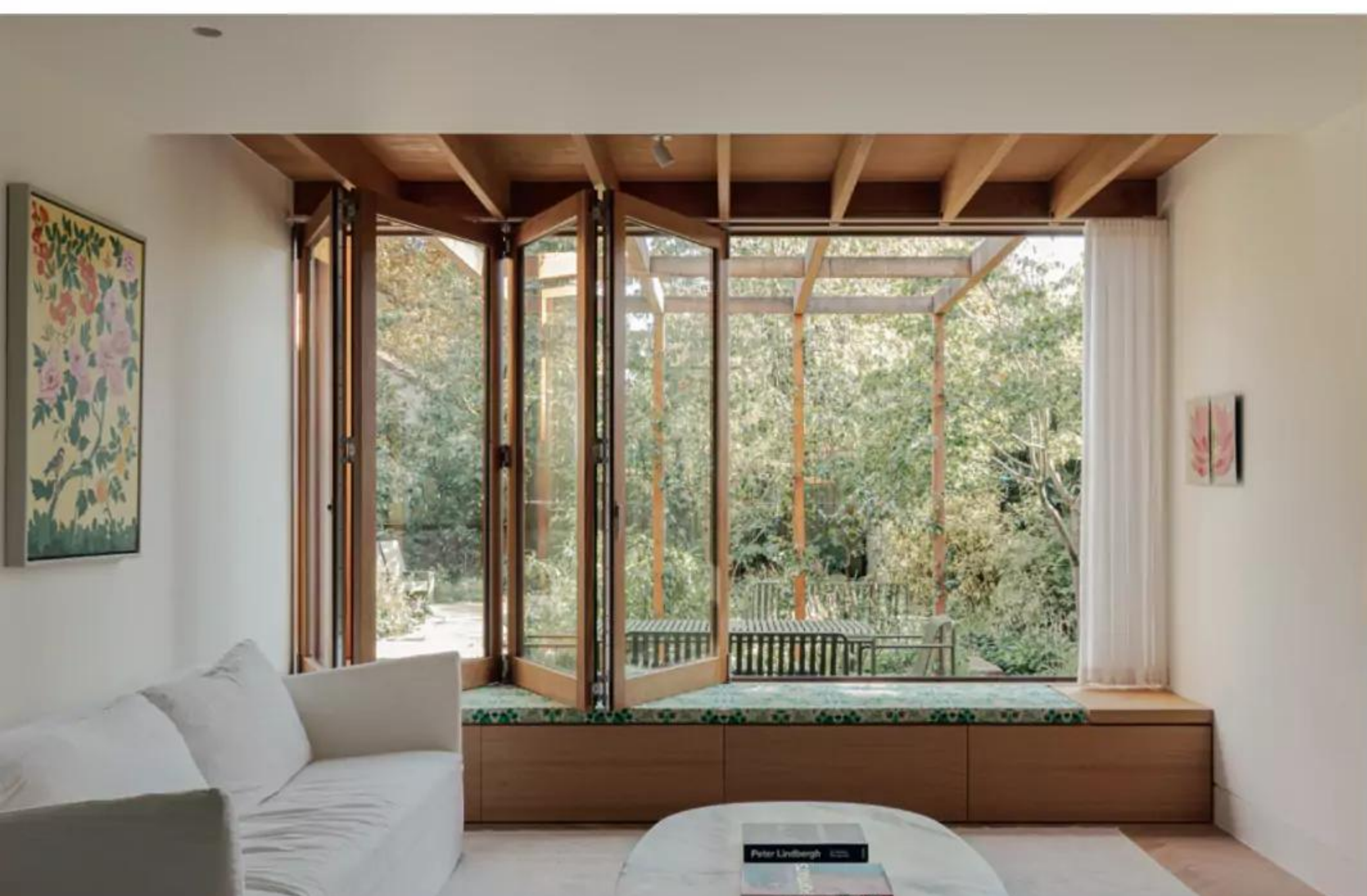
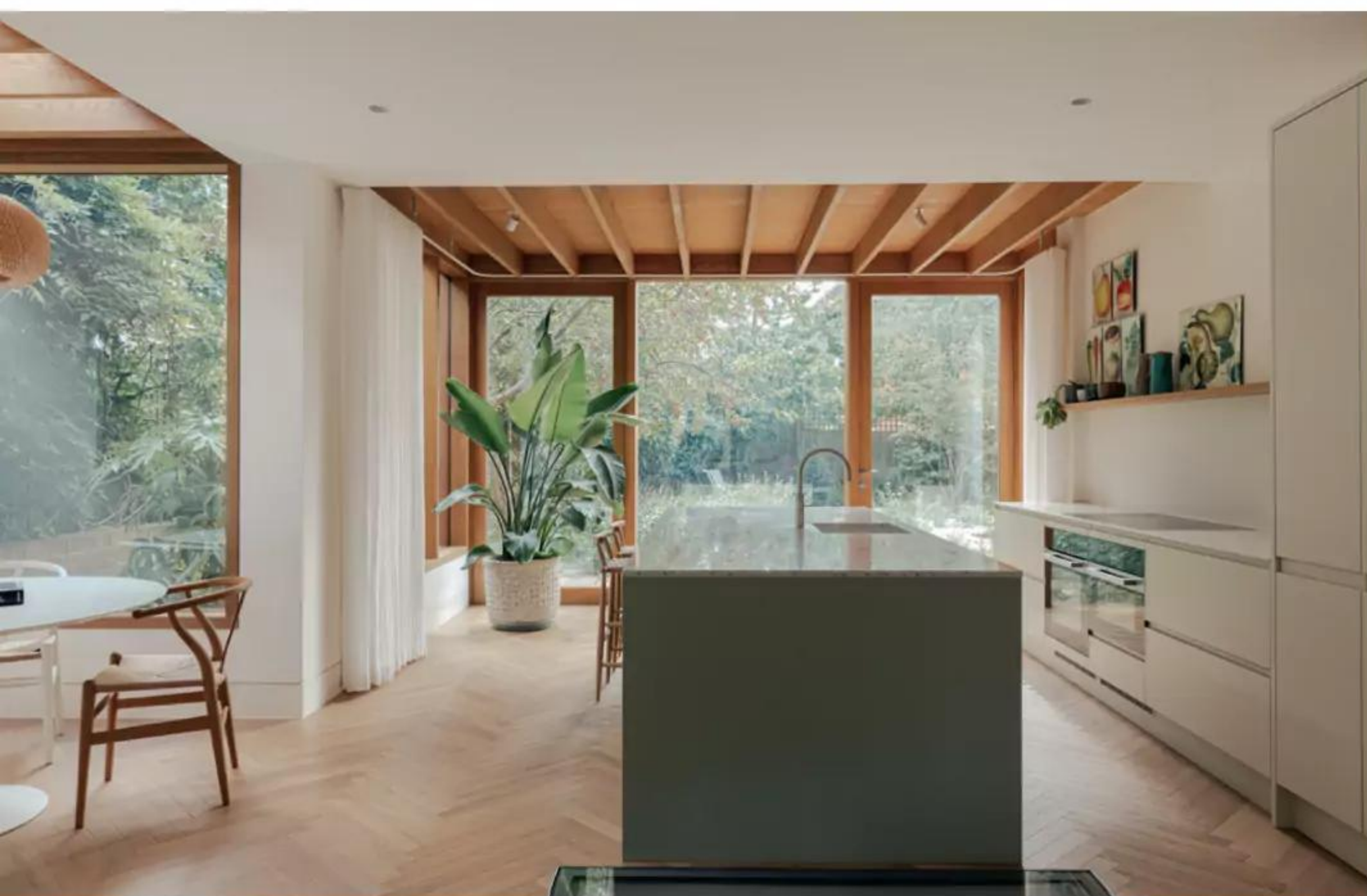
thebtc.co.uk

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need to know

Why U-values still matter in modern self builds

Being able to walk into a home that feels calm, comfortable and fresh, with minimal energy bills, is fast becoming the standard for today's self builders. At the heart of achieving this lies a key performance metric: the U-value.

U-values measure the rate at which heat is lost through a building element, such as a wall, roof or window. The lower the U-value, the better the insulation. As a result, the home stays warmer in winter, cooler in summer and more energy-efficient all year round.

At Oakwrights, we firmly believe that building beyond minimum compliance is no longer just an option – it's essential. The upcoming Future Homes Standard will demand even greater energy performance from new homes. Knowing the U-values your build-up achieves and having confidence in their consistency is a major advantage for any self builder. Our guaranteed panel system offers both high performance and the quality assurance that comes from offsite manufacturing.

The goal should always be to achieve consistently low U-values across the entire building envelope – walls, roof, floor, glazing and junctions. However, performance doesn't end there. Airtightness is just as crucial. Even the best-insulated home can suffer from unwanted heat loss. That's why we always encourage a fabric-first approach that includes good quality taping and membranes, alongside innovative solutions like AeroBarrier and careful detailing to minimise thermal bridging. Together, these measures reduce draughts, boost efficiency and contribute to the long-term performance of your home.

For self builders looking to create a high-performance, future-ready home, we recommend focusing on achieving specific thermal efficiency values. The walls should have a U-value of 0.15 W/m²K or better, ensuring good insulation, and the roof should be designed with a U-value of 0.13 W/m²K for enhanced energy efficiency. Additionally, opting for triple-glazed windows with whole-unit U-values of up to 0.98 W/m²K will improve the house's thermal performance and overall comfort.

While brick and block cavity wall construction can reach these targets, it often falls short due to onsite variables like poor quality control, thermal bridging through masonry ties and inconsistent workmanship. By contrast, systems like Oakwrights' WrightWall and WrightRoof Natural panels are built in a controlled environment, ensuring reliable U-values and excellent airtightness.

A comfortable, energy-efficient home isn't just about chasing the lowest U-value on paper. It's about creating a well-balanced, thoughtfully detailed build that combines thermal performance, airtightness, ventilation and quality materials. At Oakwrights, we're proud to offer selfbuilders a fabric-first solution that consistently exceeds Building Regulations – helping you futureproof your home, reduce energy bills and live more comfortably for years to come.



CHARLIE MILLS

is the managing director of Oakwrights. He oversees the activities of the whole business to ensure the team delivers the best possible product and service to its clients. For more information visit oakwrights.co.uk

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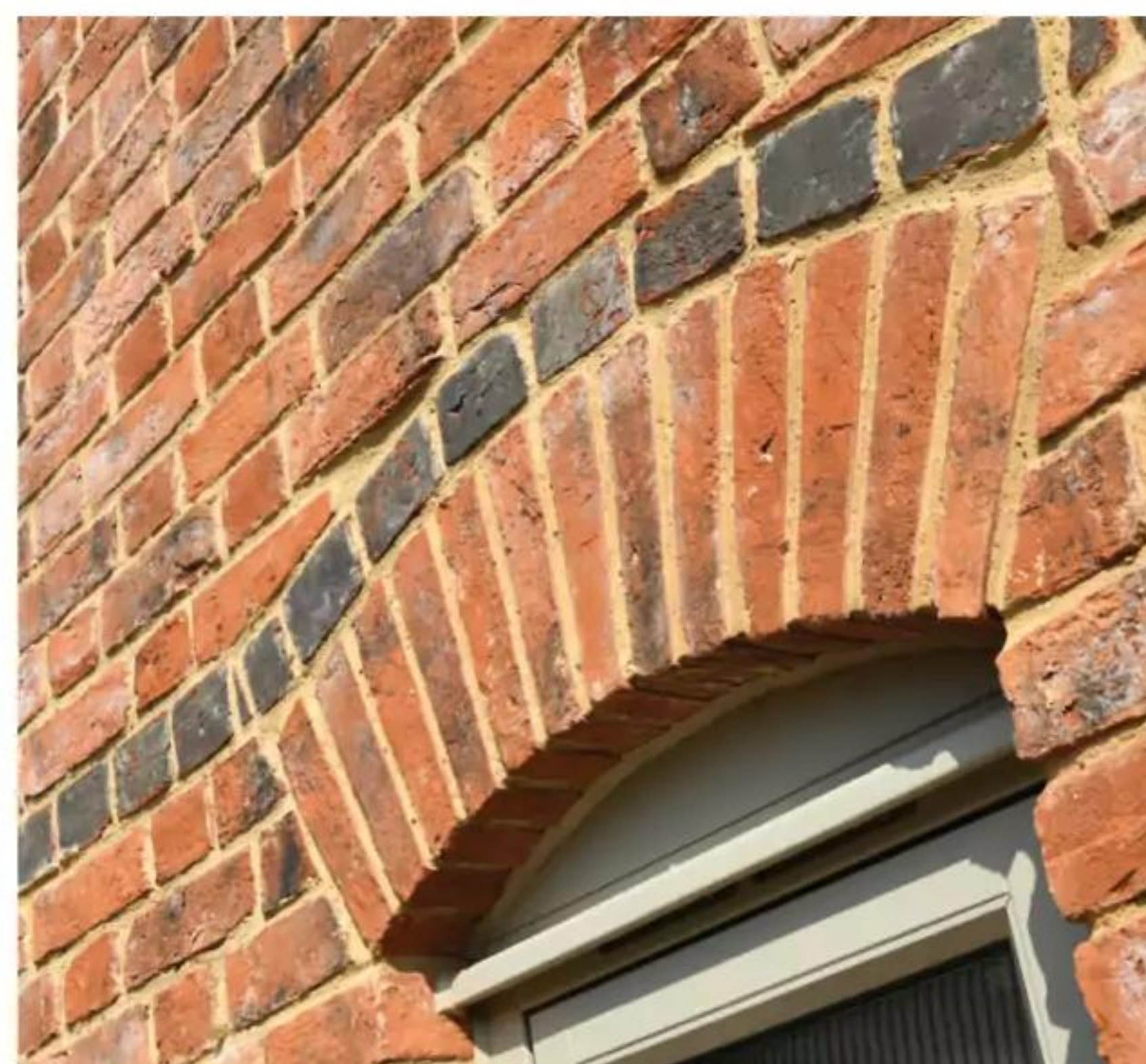
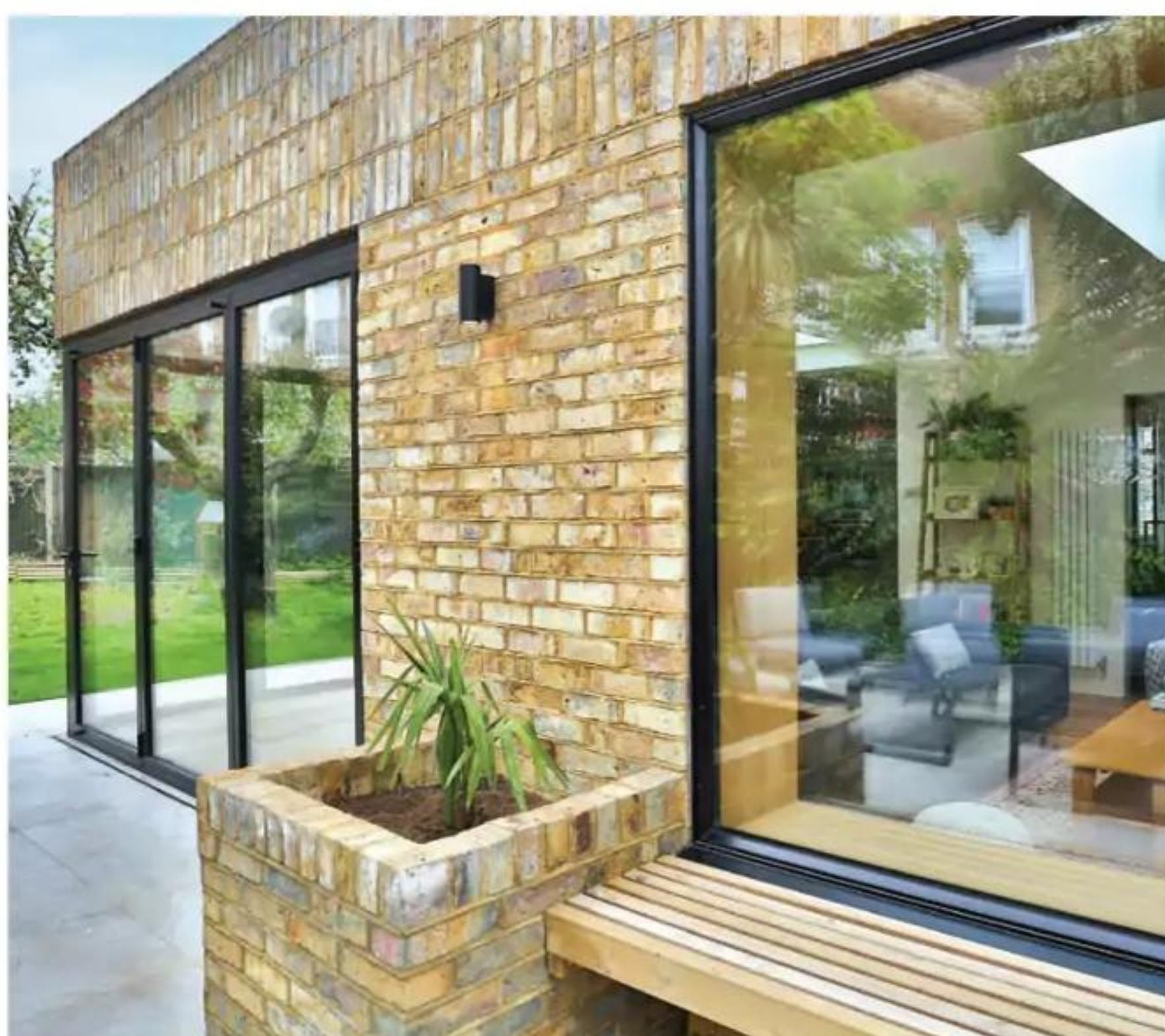
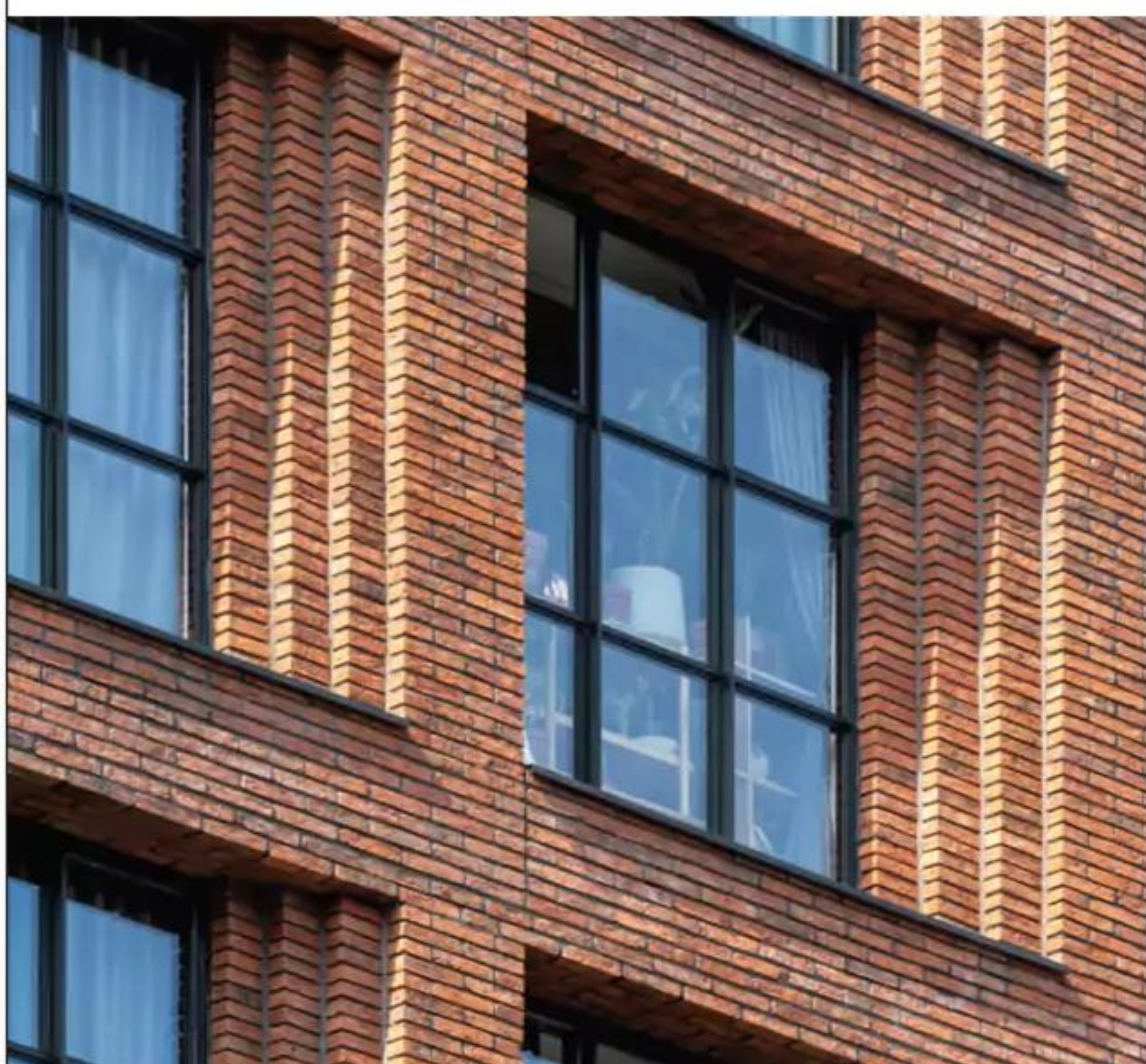


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Beckwood Apex 8m x 6m, £1,569.99, forestgarden.co.uk

£910



Sit back and relax in this spacious garden room. Large styrene windows and French doors flood the interior with natural light. Built with tongue and groove boards, it offers excellent weather resistance and durability. **Mercia Sussex 8m x 6m summerhouse, £910, diy.com**

product news

Great shopping ideas for your custom home project



GLAZING UPGRADE

PassivGlas ReGlaze is designed to easily fit into existing window rebates, make it simpler and more cost-effective to upgrade performance. The retrofit solution suits PVCu, aluminium and timber windows. **PassivGlas ReGlaze, from £255 per m², passivglas.com**

GARDEN SLEEPER POST

Ideal for raised beds, borders and small retaining walls, the Birkdale T-post is made from cold rolled steel, with a T-shaped design to make fixing sleepers simple and secure. Pre-drilled holes and a protective galvanised coating prevent corrosion.

Birkdale Sleeper T-post, from £48, birkdalesales.com



SMART EV CHARGING

This sleek, compact, buttonless 7kW EV charging point is simple to install. It includes automated solar compatibility and secure access for up to 126 users, making it the perfect solution for multi-car homes. **Zappi GLO EV charger, from £779, myenergi.com**



CHIC & PRACTICAL

Add a touch of luxury to your kitchen with this sleek induction hob. The textured matt black glass offers enhanced durability, while reducing glare and fingerprints. Two of the five cooking rings are Flexi zones for increased functionality. **Mythos K-Link Matt Black 80cm Induction Hob, £1,899, franke.com**

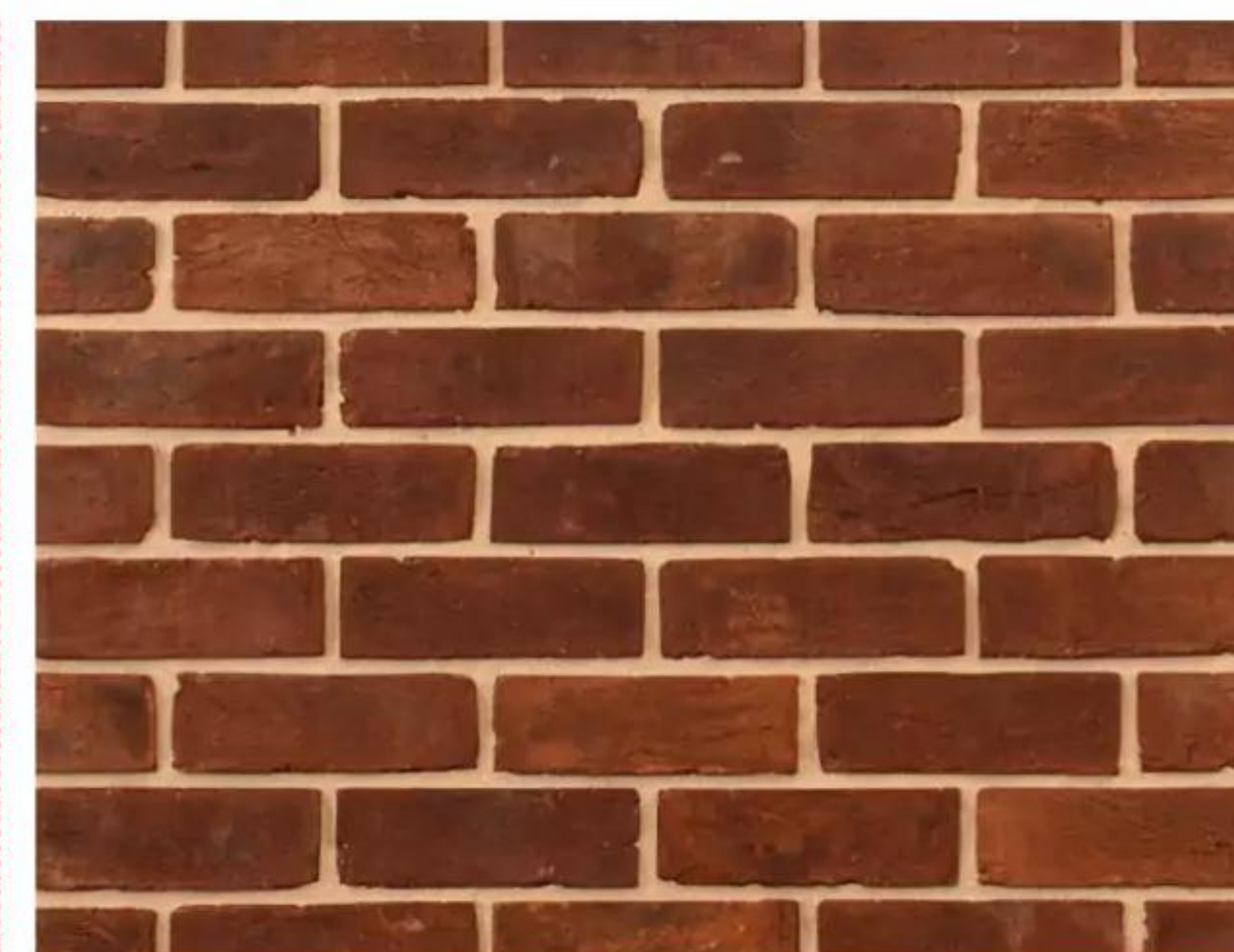
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1 Farmhouse handmade bricks, from £1.38 per brick, heritagebrickcompany.co.uk



2 Old Clamp handmade bricks, £1.40 per brick, yorkhandmade.co.uk

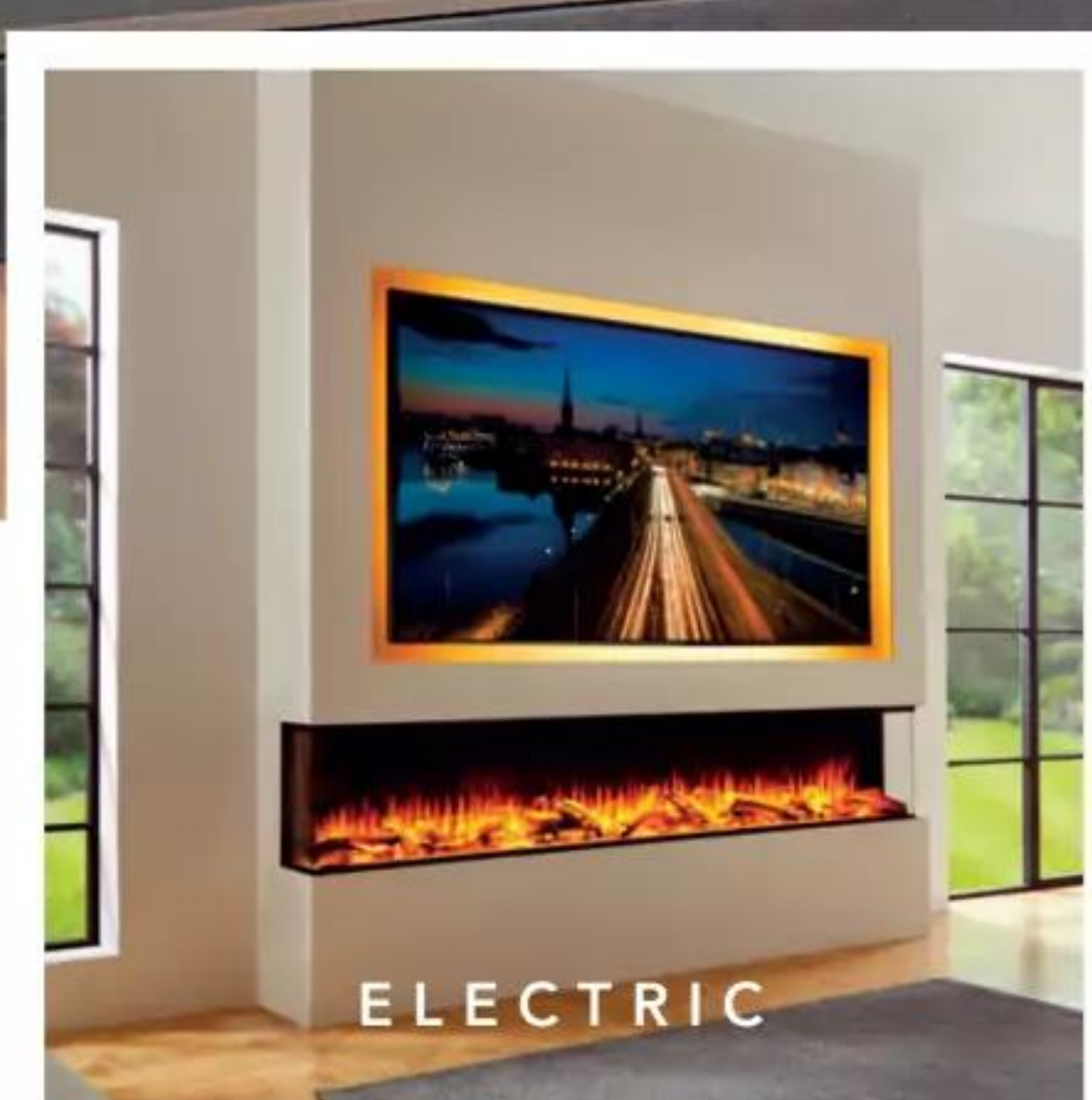


3 Weathered Red handmade bricks, from £1.20 per brick, imperialbricks.co.uk



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interiors notebook

Elevate your decor with the rich, refreshing and luxurious charm of olive green



Shopping list

1 This Shaker-style kitchen's calming green finish makes it perfect for both traditional and modern interiors. An in-house design team works closely with you to tailor every detail and bring your bespoke layout to life. **Olive & Barr Shaker kitchen in Litchen**, from £10,000, oliveandbarr.com

2 Finished in earthy green with a contrasting white interior, this vintage-look shade brings character to your space. Paired with a natural brass wall plate and detachable chain pull, it's a stylish and practical option for quiet reading nooks. **Hadano wall light with olive shade**, £75, darlighting.co.uk

3 These small tiles are perfect for creating intricate patterns, borders and decorative layouts. A washed pastel effect makes each tile unique, so you can achieve that realistic handmade feel on your walls and floors. **Petite porcelain gloss tiles in olive**, £80.64 per m², capietra.com

4 With four lockable doors, handy hooks, cable holes and adjustable shelving, this cabinet's versatility makes it great for storage, as an entertainment unit or as a striking console table. The unit is delivered flatpacked, with a simple step-by-step assembly guide. **The Standard Table in olive**, £399, mustardmade.com

5 This sofa's retro shape and simple elegance is a nod to classic mid-century style. With high, splayed arms, deep seats and plush cushions, it's sure to add a warm, cosy feature to your living space. It's completely handcrafted and can be delivered in just six weeks. **Holly two-seat sofa in olive**, £1,650, sofa.com



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- 11.00** Designing your dream home
- 11.40** Eco heating debate: PANEL SESSION
- 12.20** Renovating a home with character: updating an old house for modern eco living
- 13.00** How to add more space & value
- 13.40** The perfect way to build your home- plus the great build systems debate: PANEL SESSION
- 14.20** The different routes to managing your project
- 15.00** Building a sustainable home
- 15.40** How to find land and get planning permission

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FRENCH + TYE

8 BRILLIANT ANNEXE IDEAS

Sander Tel shares a collection of inspiring outbuildings and speaks to the experts about how to plan, design and budget for the perfect annexe from start to finish



RICHARD CHIVERS

BRIDGING THE GAP

Achieved in tandem with a single-storey kitchen extension to the main home, this project by LA Hally Architect involved converting and extending the property's existing garage to form a light-filled, two-storey annexe. The build is connected to the original house via a linking path structure, which bridges over a stream running through the site. The plot had previously felt quite disconnected, with the garden separated into two zones – one either side of the water. LA Hally therefore incorporated the stream into the annexe's design, using it to form a connection between the main home and ancillary accommodation. Both the kitchen addition and annexe have been finished with black timber cladding for visual unity. (www.lahally.com)



HARMONIOUS DESIGN

Masterminded by architects Manea Kella, this sympathetic annexe project is the result of a complete overhaul to an existing run-down garage and stabling block. Now accommodation for the main homeowner's extended family and their wide collection of books, antique furniture and artwork, the structure has been upgraded to modern standards to ensure a comfortable, light-filled ancillary building. The annexe echoes the original structure with a network of double-height interconnected spaces, creating a sense of volume and light. Bespoke Douglas fir joinery has been used throughout, and the exterior has been finished with Siberian larch cladding for a durable design that blends into the setting. (www.maneakella.com)

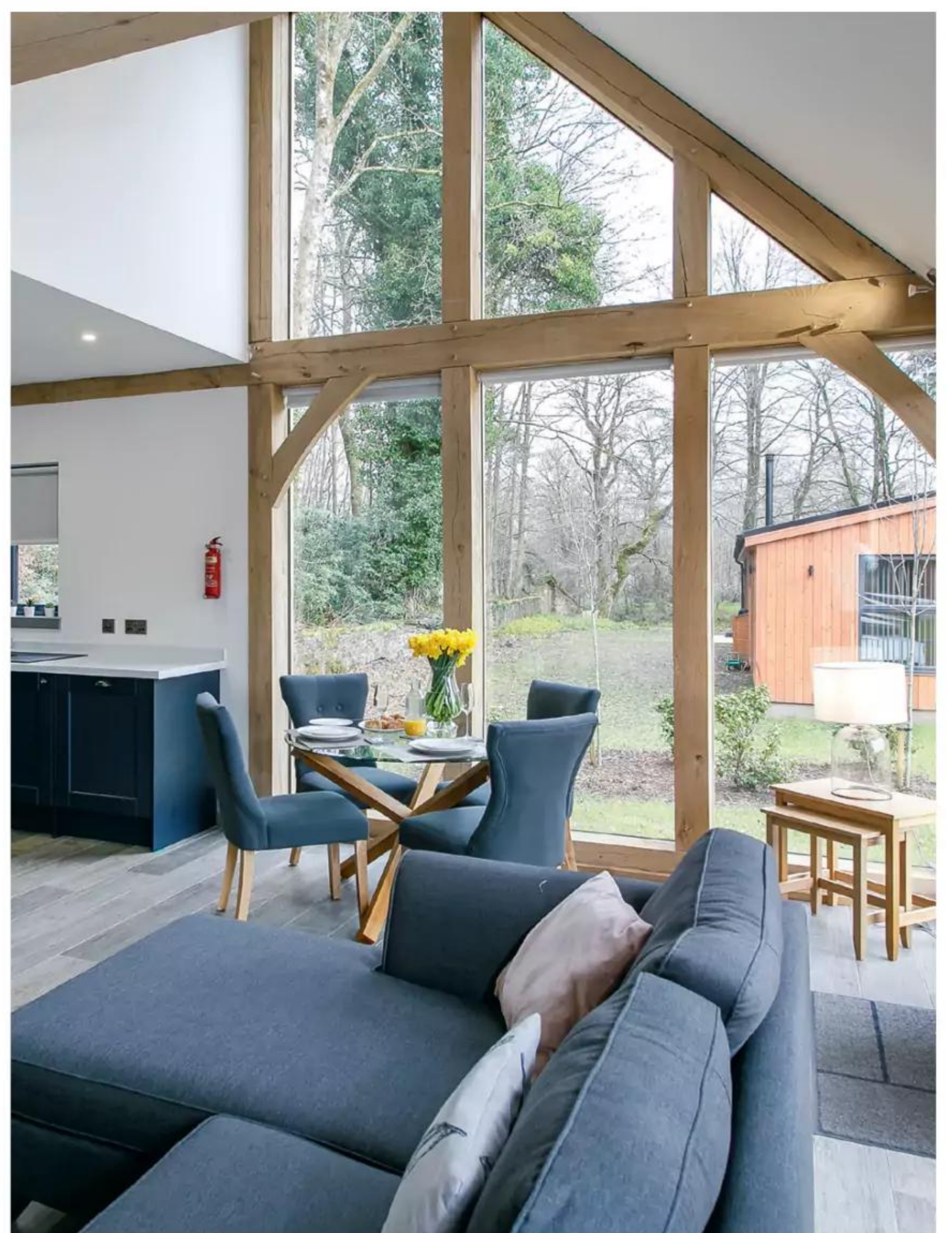


OFFSITE BUILD

Offering serene views over a natural swimming pond, this bespoke self build annexe and pool house project by Okopod has been designed to capture the beautiful surroundings. The structure prioritises sustainability and durability, making use of zero-concrete raft foundations and a prefabricated structure, ensuring excellent quality and reduced build times. The outbuilding has been finished with Yakisugi timber cladding, a sedum roof, and features a wall of glazed bifold doors. Inside, birch plywood surfaces and ceilings add a sense of warmth to the modern space. (www.okopod.com)

WATERSIDE WONDER

This striking lodge by Oakwrights sits in the heart of Ayrshire. Standing 6.2m high, the build maximises the stunning riverside views through a spectacular wall of full-height face glazing. The open-plan ground floor features double-height vaulted ceilings above the dining and living areas, while accommodating four guests across a first-floor mezzanine master suite and ground-floor bedroom. The annexe features high-quality insulation and underfloor heating, with clever touches to the layout such as bathroom access directly from the hot tub. (www.oakwrights.co.uk)





SEAMLESS TRANSITION

Designed by Matthew Giles Architects as part of a wider renovation and extension to the original Arts & Crafts house, this garden building and annexe offers the homeowners an office, spare bedroom, music room and bathroom. Glazed sliding doors and polished concrete floors help to create a seamless transition between the annexe and the beautifully landscaped garden, while vertical timber battens over the fixed windows help to reduce overheating. A green roof promotes biodiversity and enhances the build's thermal and acoustic properties. (www.matthewgilesarchitects.com)



EXPERT VIEW PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR ANNEXE PROJECT



BEN HANCOCK-PARR,
architectural services
manager at Carpenter Oak,
shares what you need to
know before getting started

Q Do I need planning permission for an annexe?

As a homeowner, you'll have access to permitted development (PD) rights, which allow you to build various extensions and outbuildings without requiring formal planning permission. Whether an annexe falls within the parameters of PD, though, depends on its size and location, and whether or not your home is within a designated zone such as an area of outstanding natural beauty or conservation area. Here are the key areas to consider to comply with PD:

● Will the annexe be near your home?

The building needs to sit within your home's curtilage (the area around your property previously used as garden space).

● **How big would you like the annexe to be?** You'll typically require planning permission if the eaves are higher than 2.5m or the ridge is higher than 3-4m.

● **How will the annexe be used?** If the annexe is to be used as separate living accommodation, you'll require formal consent. However, if the person living in the annexe is still a part of your household, then a detached building can potentially be built for them, including a bedroom, without planning permission.

Q **Do I need Building Regs approval?** In most cases, you will need to make a building control application for your project, especially if it's going to be larger than 30m², or include sleeping accommodation.

Q Will an annexe add value to my property?

An annexe will usually add significant value to your house. Homes which can allow multi-

generational living are becoming highly sought after, such as those with nearby outbuildings for elderly relatives. Naturally, for a future purchaser to value your annexe, it's essential that it's well constructed and has all of the required planning or Building Regulations approvals in place. It will also help if the build adds to your house's overall aesthetic. We find that our beautifully hand-crafted oak buildings are extremely desirable when they come to market.

Q What should I factor into a budget when building an annexe?

When figuring out how much to spend on a project, you'll need to factor in the costs for design, planning permission, construction materials and labour, plus any renewable technologies such as solar panels or an air source heat pump. Consider the size and complexity of the annexe, too, as well as the quality of materials and finishes you're after. Crucially, you also need to allow for VAT, as unlike new homes, this is chargeable at 20%.



IN WITH THE NEW

Looking to replace a derelict barn on his plot with a new build to use for accommodation and a wood workshop, this homeowner approached Carpenter Oak to help him realise the scheme. The charming, two-storey oak frame annexe features an air source heat pump, with solar panels on the roof, a Tesla PowerWall battery, and is insulated with mineral wool and wood fibre insulation. The internal oak doors, external garage doors, and the fascias and bargeboards were made from locally-grown wood sourced from a nearby sawmill, and created by local craftspeople. (www.carpenteroak.com)



LIGHT-FILLED LIVING

Set in the scenic Welsh countryside, this detached and unloved garage was transformed into a stunning multi-purpose annexe. Located a few metres from the family home, the owners turned the building into a new space for themselves and their guests, complete with reclaimed oak flooring from The Main Company. (www.maincompany.co.uk)



SENSITIVE RESTORATION

This project by Snell David Architects involved converting the site's existing single-storey listed barn to create ancillary accommodation and a new, light-filled kitchen. Both the architects and homeowners were keen to retain and embrace the structure's original features, such as the internal timber beams and tin roof. The barn required underpinning to ensure stability, while the timber frame structure had to be dismantled and re-erected to comply with conservation regulations. This allowed the build team to dig new foundations and construct a low brick plinth wall to help separate the broken-plan internal living spaces. (www.snell-david.co.uk)



EXPERT VIEW DESIGNING AN ANCILLARY BUILDING



LESLEY HALLY, principal architect at **LA Hally Architect**, looks at the key factors to note when putting together your scheme

EXTERIOR MATERIALS & FINISHES

We have worked on several annexes and found that it does make sense for the structure to complement the main building. This could be achieved with the exterior materials, shape and form, orientation etc. The annexe doesn't need to look like a mini version of the main property, or have to be styled to match exactly, but using a palette inspired by the original build will ensure everything marries together well. Focussing on a key material or texture from the main house, or the surrounding context, is a good way to reference the original but in a more refined way. In terms of the annexe's context, we often try to tie the structures together with the use of hard and soft landscaping, so they don't look too separated.

MAXIMISING SPACE

It's important to consider who will be using the space and what for. In terms of the kitchen, look to incorporate a chopping board over the sink to gain extra surface. Building in storage solutions into every available nook is great, too, although this can be expensive. The bathroom should be as compact as possible without compromising comfort. Consider a built-in cistern and storage, and perhaps a wet room with alcoves to avoid restricted cubicles. We try to maximise every bit of unused space to design in shelves etc, such as high level areas above kitchen units and showers.

If rooms are to be more multifunctional, you could consider foldaway furniture (such as wall beds). Underfloor heating, infrared ceiling mounted panels or skirting level heating will avoid using up valuable wall and storage space, too.

ORIENTATION & PRIVACY

When designing an annexe, it's important to strike the right balance between creating visual harmony and ensuring privacy. If, for example, the build is to be used as a holiday rental, this visual connection would likely be avoided, and perhaps planting and screening will be required to ensure the annexe feels completely private and avoid overlooking for both dwellings. It's important at the outset, when the site is being analysed, to ensure the build has pleasant views and access to the sun for solar panels and natural warmth, while ensuring it avoids glare and overheating.

SUSTAINABLE FEATURES

When designing environmental features into an annexe, the same care and attention is required when creating a larger-scaled building. We try to avoid too much solar gain by considering the position of the building on the site. If this is tricky to avoid completely, it's sensible to incorporate external overhangs and solar shutters, rather than just relying on internal blinds and curtains. With small buildings you could install an electric boiler with wet underfloor heating and even solar PV if the annexe is in the right location. We are finding more and more clients want to incorporate bee bricks and bat boxes, too, to support biodiversity, and have had the chance to add green roofs to some outbuilding projects.

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26 ENERGY EFFICIENT OFFSITE HOME

Carving out a plot from their heritage home's garden has allowed Peter and Sarah Ford to move into a new, modern property in the same area



42

35 FOREVER HOME TRANSFORMATION

After storm damage left Nicole and David Price's home of 25 years in a bad way, they used the opportunity to undertake a renovation and create their perfect property

42 BUILDING ON THE EDGE

This beach-side spot was the ideal location for Adrian and Erika Evans' sustainable, contemporary dream home

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35



ENERGY EFFICIENT OFFSITE HOME

After their Georgian manor became too much to manage, **Peter and Sarah Ford** decided to use their vegetable patch to build themselves a low-energy home for modern living

WORDS **JENNIFER GRIMBLE** PHOTOS **HARRY VAN GORKUM**

Peter and Sarah Ford had lived in a grand Georgian house for decades, but after they finally finished a 15-year renovation project, they felt ready to move on. "Once our two sons moved out, my wife, daughter and I were rattling around in a huge house," Peter explains. "We'd pretty much done everything there was to do and always liked a project."

Having witnessed their bills increase exponentially over the years, they had a cost-efficient property in mind. "Our energy payments had been off the charts," says Sarah. "So, we started thinking about building a new, energy-efficient house that would allow us to downsize and save money." The pair signed up to PlotBrowser and were looking for land locally, when a friend suggested they utilise part of their garden. "It was like a light bulb went off – we'd never thought about it before, but it made perfect sense," says Peter.

Carving off an acre of land for development left over two acres for the buyer of their home. "Our estate agent said it wouldn't affect

the value and we'd actually found the garden to be hard to manage, so reducing its size made the property more saleable," says Peter. Decision made, the couple attended a few self build exhibitions to seek inspiration and after exploring their options, decided on a German kit company. "We wanted a turnkey package and were drawn to the speed of construction, the insulation values and the design flexibility of offsite manufacturing," says Peter.

From turnkey to shell

The couple engaged a firm, meeting with one of their trusted architects, Urbancurve, to begin the design. They were quite far into the process when Brexit and Covid hit. "A lot of the German kit companies decided they were no longer able to offer full turnkey homes," says Peter. "We were originally quoted £1.3 million for turnkey and the company we had chosen said the shell alone would be £1.1 million. £200,000 for us to do everything else just wasn't enough. That's when we started shopping around."

After looking at alternative offsite manufacturers, the couple hired Meisterstueck-Haus. "They offered us a good price and we liked the quality and look of their previous projects," says Sarah. "We really liked working with Urbancurve, and since the home design was almost finished, we retained them." Plans for a modern home that made the most of the countryside views emerged. "Our main aim was to build something modern, with plenty of natural light," says Sarah. "We liked Bauhaus architecture, so originally asked for a rear elevation that was mostly glass, but our architect was smart enough to guide us on the advantages of solar shading."

The couple had lived in a very traditional house with dozens of rooms and often felt disconnected from one another. "It was



Left: The couple's modern home was prefabricated in the Meisterstueck-Haus production plant in Hamelin, Germany, using the latest CNC-controlled technology. The construction system provides the house with exceptional levels of insulation, fire prevention, damp-proofing and soundproofing

Below: Clad in a mix of render and spruce cladding, the property benefits from thermally efficient windows, fitted with external shutters on the south-facing side, to avoid overheating during the summer months



important for our new home to have a better connection between rooms," says Peter. "We didn't want to go fully open-plan, so we chose a broken-plan layout with some self-contained spaces."

The project was submitted to the planners, but was quickly rejected. "It was during Covid, so we were assigned a planning officer who didn't live in Norfolk," says Peter. "They never even visited the site." The application was rejected due to the couple's proposed plot. "The village has a set development area and the patch of land chosen was partially outside this boundary. Once we selected

a plot within the village development area, our former vegetable patch, the planners had no reason to reject us."

Getting going

The challenge was, there was no access road. Peter and Sarah were told they had to create a long, U-shaped driveway for highway visibility. So, these works were undertaken as a priority. "It was a big and expensive job," says Sarah. "It probably cost us £35,000." While the road was being built, the couple ordered their timber frame kit.



FACT FILE

NAMES Peter & Sarah Ford

OCCUPATIONS Telecoms software executive & homemaker

LOCATION Shropham, Norfolk

TYPE OF PROJECT Self build

PROJECT ROUTE Architect designed, shell by Meisterstueck-Haus, hired project manager & individual trades

LAND COST Already owned

HOUSE SIZE 350m²

PLOT SIZE 1.5 acres

PROJECT COST £1,103,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £3,151

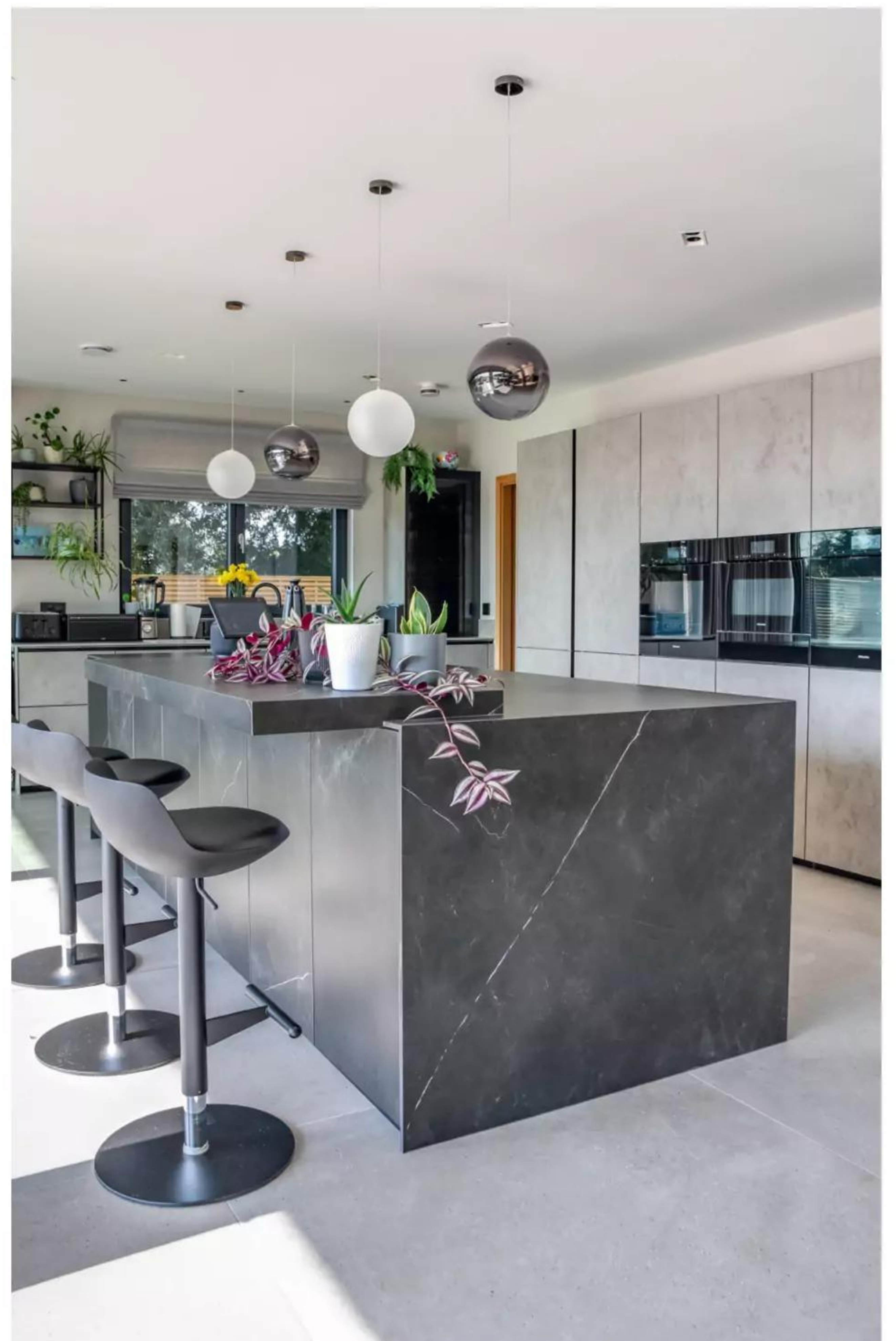
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED August 2022

BUILDING WORK TOOK 10 months

CURRENT VALUE £1,500,000

Above: The entrance hall provides the perfect welcome space, thanks to the bespoke brushed stainless steel, glass and timber staircase, Aksent wall cladding by Norstone and Bottega Acero floor tiles by Porcelanosa

Right: The Next125 kitchen benefits from light grey Beton Grau units, a Calatorao island and a Beton Silk worktop, both by Neolith



The next step was preparing the site and installing foundations ready for the structural frame's arrival. Urbancurve supplied an experienced project manager, who focused on the day-to-day running of the site. However, Peter and Sarah took a hands-on role, hiring their individual contractors, managing them and sourcing materials. "We hired a local contractor to construct the raft foundations," says Peter. "The soil here is very sandy, so we needed to install a full mesh reinforced steel base, with a concrete slab."

Insulation was added on top and then, together with their daughter, Peter and Sarah laid a damp proof membrane, ready for the installation of the timber frame. "Meisterstueck-Haus sent an engineer to check that the foundations were accurate,



then they erected the kit." The home's insulated panels were craned into place and in the space of a few hours, the ground floor was finished. "I took the day off work, sat in a garden chair and watched the house coming together before my eyes," says Peter. "That was a real highlight."

The original plan was for the couple to stay in their Georgian home until their new residence was finished, but it didn't quite work out. "We had to sell early to fund the project," says Sarah. "We moved into rented accommodation, but for a very short period of time. We were walking around upstairs in a watertight, airtight house on day four of the build." In less than a week, the property had internal Fermacell walls, windows, doors and a finished roof.

Sarah and Peter hired general contractors for the final fix works, but also completed plenty of jobs themselves. "We carried out messy sanding tasks, plastered the walls ready for the decorators and even prepared and installed the stair treads, which were supplied unfinished," says Sarah. "We stained and waxed them all to match the internal flooring. I also took on the role of interior designer."

Finished product

In 10 months, the couple's new home was complete. Set at the end of a dramatic resin-bound driveway, the property blends an external palette of render and spruce timber cladding. The rear of the house is contemporary and bold, with plenty of glass and balconies that make the most of the idyllic surrounding views.

The front door leads into a spacious double-height hallway and flows through to the open-plan living area, which features the kitchen, dining room and lounge. The ground floor is also home

Above: The kitchen has triple ovens that provide complete flexibility

Right: The overhanging roof creates a lovely outdoor living space, complete with a built-in kitchen from Grillo on the patio underneath

Below right: The snug is a cosy and relaxing room with dark walls and ceiling that let the vibrant artwork and blue and orange furnishings stand out

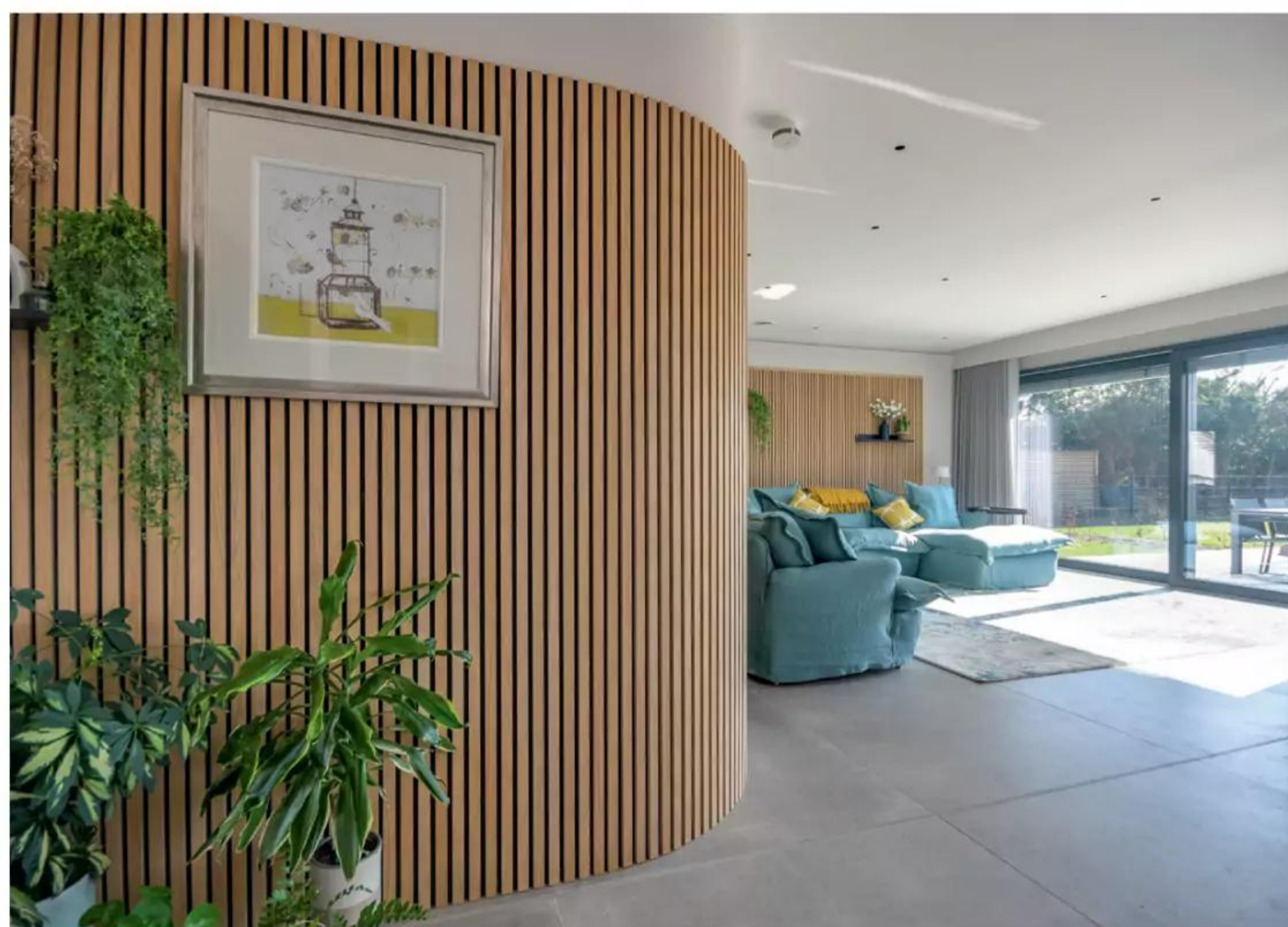




Above & right: The living room within the open-plan space features large sliding glazed doors and attractive timber wall panelling

Left: The house benefits from a separate utility space, boot room and pantry, helping to maintain a clutter-free kitchen

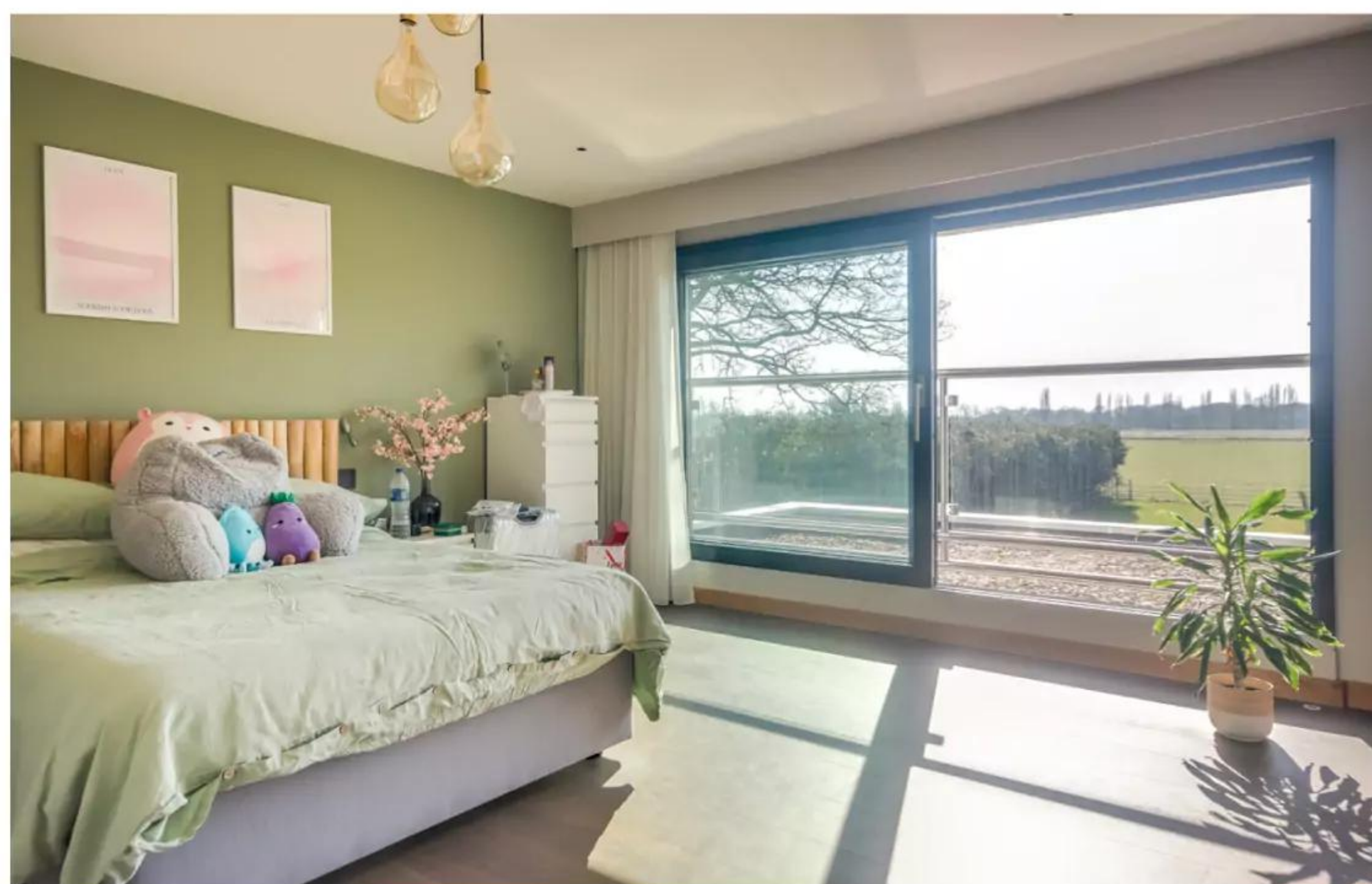
Below right: The bedrooms benefit from lots of sunlight thanks to large glazed areas



to a gym, utility room, boot room and snug. The bespoke staircase leads up to the first floor, where three bedrooms (two of them ensuite), a family bathroom and an office can be found.

Creating an energy-efficient home was important to Peter and Sarah and, thanks to the property's highly insulated timber frame, the building achieved an EPC A rating of 103. "We have solar panels, a heat pump, underfloor heating and an MVHR system with ComfoClima, which is like air-conditioning and takes the internal temperature down during summer," says Sarah. "We also have battery storage for our energy and two EV chargers, too. We rarely need to turn the heating on."

For the Fords, the most rewarding part was watching their home take shape. "We visited the site throughout the process and there was always something new to see," says Peter. "I remember sitting





WE LEARNED...

WHEN DEALING WITH TRADES, communication is key. We spent lots of time deciding what we wanted before hiring our contractors, then gave them the exact specifications of what we needed.

CONSIDER HIRING A LIGHTING DESIGNER. Our lighting scheme is one of the biggest things that impacted the final look and feel of the house.

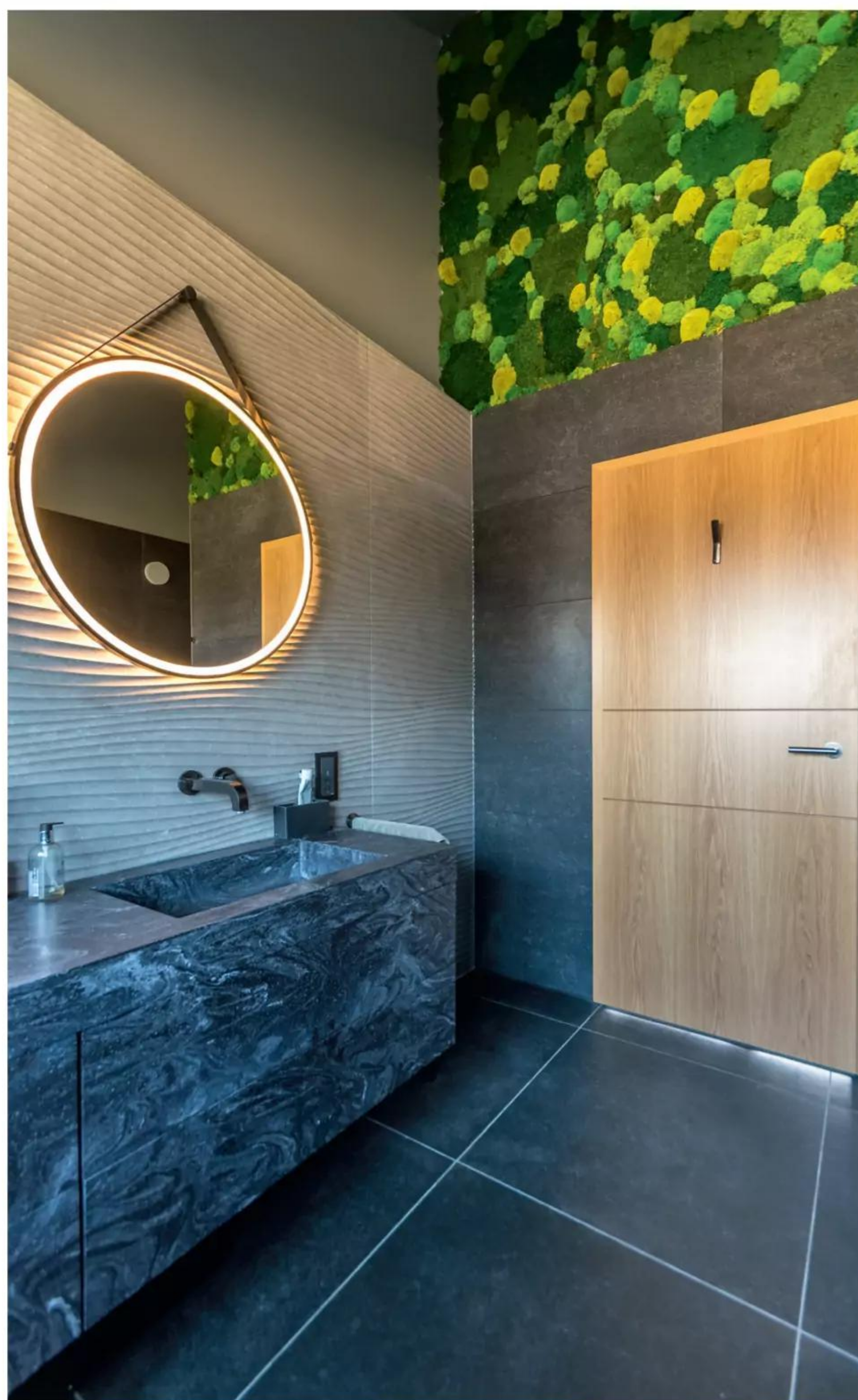
NOT CREATING ANY DRAMA or pressure for ourselves was the biggest takeaway for us. Consider being flexible with your project timeline and try not to set yourself too many deadlines along the way; they only add stress.

Above: The master bedroom balcony is a relaxing spot to sit and enjoy the far-reaching views

Right: The master bathroom features a green moss wall that the couple created themselves, using preserved moss and marine ply. The bathroom sanitaryware is from Axor's Citterio collection, finished in brushed black chrome

on our new patio, popping a champagne bottle on a late summer evening. We had that sense of 'we've done it.' As for their favourite space, the couple love their hallway. "The double-height space with a vaulted ceiling, has a cathedral-like quality with a glass balustrade on the landing upstairs. It's got real wow factor," says Sarah.

Aside from having a trade go AWOL in the middle of the job, the couple found the process of building their own home incredibly enjoyable and stress-free. "We've seen all the TV shows and there's always drama, but we didn't experience that," says Sarah. "We had an amazing team of trades and Ashwell Construction and Renovation were brilliant. They really rallied around us when issues arose and made the process very smooth." The couple puts the success of the project down to not setting unrealistic expectations and deadlines. "We just thought, we'll move in when the house is finished. We'd do it again in a heartbeat, but I don't think we'll need to, as we've created our forever home."



closer look

Lighting design...

When Peter and Sarah first began exploring the prospect of building they visited a completed kit home. “It was a lovely property, but every room was like a landing strip, with halogen down lights,” says Peter. “We felt it spoilt the look and feel of the property, but we had no idea how we could make our lighting better.” They decided to invest in a lighting designer to help them create the perfect atmosphere. “We knew what we didn’t like but we had no idea what we wanted,” says Sarah. “Norwich Architectural Lighting helped us to build a layered lighting scheme, with general, accent and task lighting. We can set mood lighting for different tasks and times, such as working, watching a movie or bedtime.” For the couple, this is one of the most impactful elements that has helped make their house a home. “People often comment on this aspect of the house,” says Sarah.



Wow factor illumination



Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£57	2%	£20,000
Foundations	£229	6%	£80,000
Entire shell including windows, doors, roofing, internal fermacell walls & garage)	£1,543	49%	£540,000
Floor screed, plasterboard ceilings	£86	3%	£30,000
Smart home (KNX)	£114	4%	£40,000
Flooring	£114	4%	£40,000
Joinery & fittings	£23	1%	£8,000
Plumbing & heating (includes bathroom & kitchen)	£514	16%	£180,000
Electrics	£114	4%	£40,000
Decorating	£29	1%	£10,000
Fees	£43	1%	£15,000
External works	£286	9%	£100,000
Grand total			£1,103,000

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **Urbancurve Architecture** 01233 713870 www.urbancurve.co.uk **TIMBER FRAME & WINDOWS** **Meisterstueck-Haus** 01235 227270 www.meisterstueck.com **GENERAL BUILDER** **Ashwell Construction & Renovation** 01603 872564 www.ashwell-build.co.uk **PLASTERING** **Friendly Finishing Solutions** 01206 251979 www.friendlyfinishingsolutions.co.uk **DOORS** **Hormann** www.hormann.co.uk **KITCHEN** **Next125** www.next125.com **Atlantic Bathrooms & Kitchens** 01603 402222 www.atlanticbathrooms.com **BATHROOMS** **Baytree Bathrooms** 01284 763618 www.baytreebathrooms.co.uk **STAIRCASE** **Canal Engineering** 0115 986 6321 www.canalengineering.co.uk **DRESSING ROOM FURNITURE** **Poliform** www.poliform.it **LIGHTING** **Norwich Architectural Lighting** 01603 418821 www.lighteastanglia.co.uk **PLUMBING AND ELECTRICS** **Synergy** 01626 776267 www.synergyphr.co.uk **HOME TECHNOLOGY** **Gira** 01483 713400 www.gira.com **SMART HOME TECHNOLOGY** **Ready Controls** 020 3026 0028 www.readycontrols.co.uk **TILES** **Porcelanosa** www.porcelanosa.com **Norstone** 0203 178 2801 www.norstone.co.uk **TILER** **Danny Nabarro Ceramics** 01603 448318 www.nabarroc ceramics.co.uk **PAINT** **Fenwick & Tilbrook** 01362 684125 www.fenwickandtilbrook.com **AUTOMATED CURTAIN TRACKS** **Silent Gliss** 01843 863571 www.silentgliss.co.uk **LANDSCAPING** **Will Draper Garden Design** 07788 452272 www.norfolkgardendesign.com **DRIVEWAY** **The TP Group** 01277 841415 www.thetpgroup.co.uk **OUTDOOR KITCHEN** **Grillo** 01223 866130 www.grilloliving.com **GARDEN SCULPTURE** **David Harber** 01235 895300 www.davidharber.co.uk **MOSS WALL** **Preserved Moss** www.preservedmoss.co.uk



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From the front, the terraced house appears to be a modest two-storey property, but the rear view showcases the extent of this revamped family home



FOREVER HOME TRANSFORMATION

Nicole and David Price considered moving from their home of 25 years, but stripping the building back to its bones and reworking the space gave them the chance to adapt their much-loved house into their perfect property

WORDS **CAROLINE EDNIE** PHOTOS **FRENCH + TYE**

In 2020, Nicole and David Price reached a crossroads in terms of what they should do next with their much-loved terraced home in Highgate, London, where they'd lived for 25 years. Sadly, a flood had left the property in a bad state. The couple pondered moving house and downsizing now that their three children were at the stage of leaving home. Their other choice was to take on what would undoubtedly be a huge, and daunting, renovation project. "We had a massive flood that went right through the house from the roof down into the bedrooms, living room and kitchen below," says Nicole. "We are positioned on a slope, so the water went absolutely everywhere. Our house had holes in the ceiling, no heating upstairs and the water stopped even working at

Above: The house's rear elevation features three styles of architecture, from the original Georgian bricks to the bays that were added during the Victorian and Edwardian periods. The design of this new renovation aims to bring the styles together in a harmonious way. The brick, lime render and glazed sliding doors to the garden of the new extension provide a subtle modern twist to the back of the building



one point. Everything was just hanging together after 25 years of living in it."

At this stage the couple invited an estate agent to come round to help them make the decision between whether to stay or move house. "Instead of giving me a valuation, the agent said that we'd be mad to sell up!"

says Nicole. "We had a lot of reasons to stay and we did love our home. Our three children, although they are grown up, also said they never want us to move. We have a very long garden with a studio at the end and woods at the back, plus there's a tube station nearby."

Finalising a design

A complete overhaul felt like a job to tackle, but after deliberating for a while a chance meeting with architect Stuart Archer provided a watershed moment for the project. "I accompanied my son to a property viewing, which turned out to be Stuart's home," says Nicole. "I liked how he'd renovated the terraced house, so set up a meeting with him and architectural practice partner Sarah Braun –

**FACT FILE****NAMES** Nicole & David Price**OCCUPATIONS** Artist & barrister**LOCATION** North London**TYPE OF PROJECT**

Renovation & extension

STYLE Georgian with historical
Victorian & Edwardian extensions**CONSTRUCTION METHOD**

Brick & timber frame extension

PROJECT ROUTE

Architect & contractor

PROPERTY COST Already owned**HOUSE SIZE** 250m²**PROJECT COST** £671,847**PROJECT COST PER M²** £2,687**BUILDING WORK COMMENCED**

May 2022

BUILDING WORK TOOK One year

Above & right: The DeVol kitchen was designed to have the feeling of a more informal kitchen that had accrued over time, with a vintage vibe rather than a modern fitted kitchen. Features such as the haberdashery units with glass doors and the island on legs create the loose furniture effect that Nicole wanted



we all hit it off. I wanted architects that would be invested, as giving our house a new lease of life was a very personal project for us.”

Nicole’s brief was for a full internal refurbishment. Bringing light into the back of the house and creating a better connection to the garden were also key. As the house is a grade II listed property in a conservation area of North London, the project wouldn’t be without its challenges. “Normally, when you think of a listed building you think of it as a building from one era that hasn’t changed and its listing focuses on protecting it,” says architect Stuart Archer. “But this Georgian house has been chopped and changed over the years and features three separate elements that are visually distinct – a



WE LEARNED...

CAREFULLY PLANNING OUR ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING

has created a wonderful result. We wanted high quality and discreet background lighting to complement the daylight. We installed a lot of spotlights that can be moved around the wall to either recede into the background or be used to highlight whatever art we would like to show. We chose a mix of high quality discreet light fittings and also more bold decorative pieces.

HAVING A HIDDEN UTILITY ROOM with units, worktops, a sink and storage means the main kitchen can be kept clear – great for hiding dirty stuff when we have a dinner party. It's so nice to hang washing in there rather than having it all over the house.

OUR KITCHEN ISLAND feels like a piece of furniture thanks to being on legs. Different green colours on the island and units, along with a mix of textures and materials, gives it a sense of a kitchen accrued over time. It has a vintage feel even though it is all new.

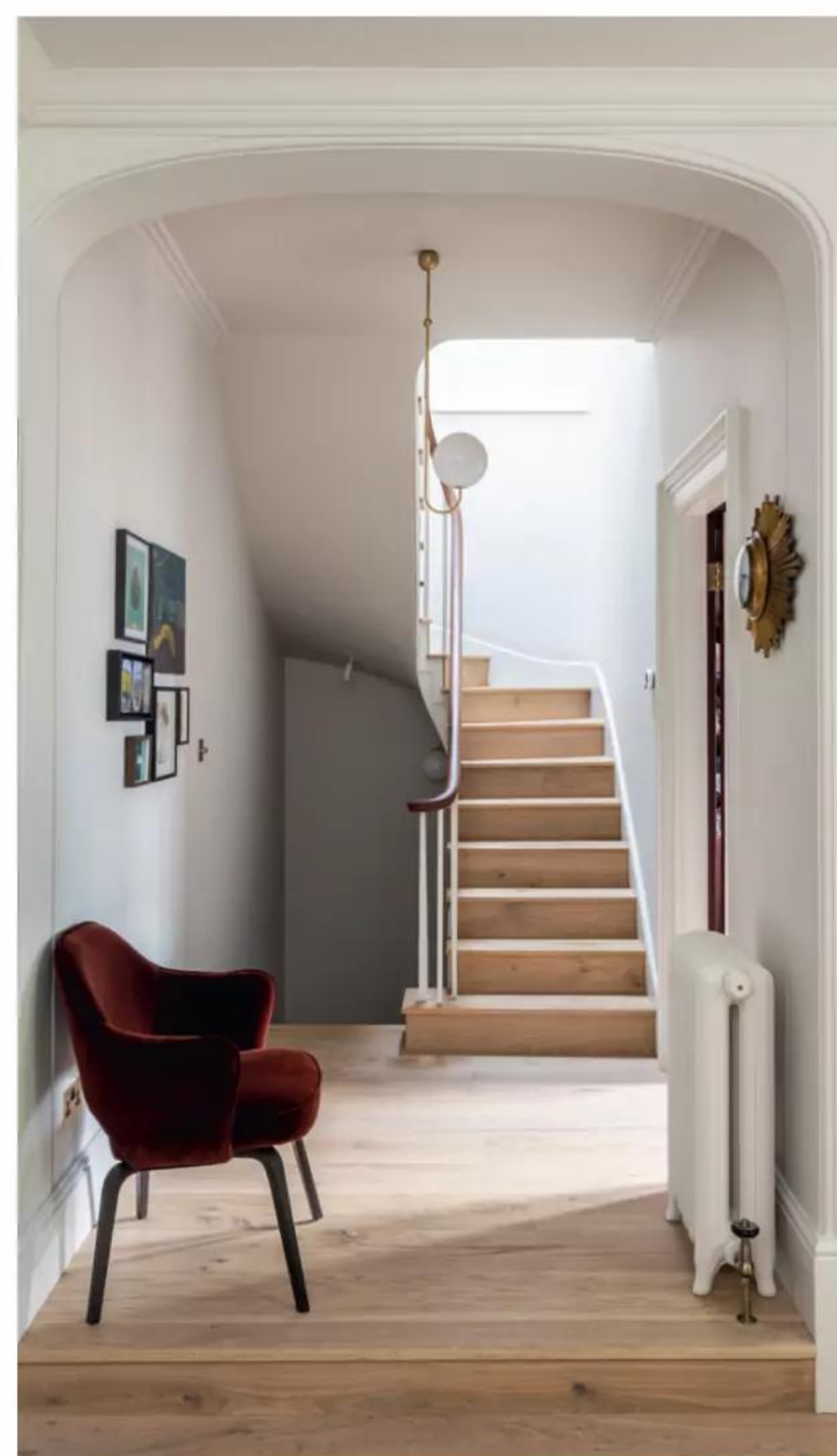


result of extensions in the 19th and early 20th centuries. There was a real cluster of styles at the back of the house.”

Initially, Nicole was keen on a wide modern glass extension going across the back of the building. But this was rejected by planners, who felt that the history of the three styles should be able to be read at the property’s rear. “It was a complex process getting through planning and took over a year and a half,” says Stuart.

The final design was for a new extension at lower ground level that would bring cohesion to the back of the building. Split into two distinct elements to reflect the tripartite styles of the rear elevation, the new extension features floor to ceiling sliding doors to the dining area and three vertical slot windows to the kitchen, set between brick piers. Rooflights have been introduced into a former balcony, acting as a lightwell above the kitchen.

The colours and tones of the brickwork and metalwork to the new extension were chosen to bring together the various disparate



Above: An opening was created between the kitchen and dining area to form a large open plan area. Nicole and the architects chose the furnishings and lighting, which are a mix of modern and vintage

Left: The hallway features Russwood oak flooring and staircase treads. The original staircase balustrade has been restored along with other Georgian features, such as the archway and corning



Left: The master bedroom on the upper level (and all the bedrooms) has been fully refurbished with new Russwood oak flooring laid. The period features have been restored and re-decorated. Nicole chose the earthy colour palette to create a tranquil feel

Below: The master ensuite was designed to have a minimalist modern look with the marble and brass fittings adding a classic vintage feel

materials of the existing rear facade. These include aged buff London stock brickwork, red brickwork and lime render.

Reworking the space

The existing layout was small and boxy with lots of walls and beams. Even though the property is south facing, the rooms inside were dark, so the area at the back of the house was remodeled to open things up. "This involved a lot of structural work, including new foundations and floor slab," says architect Sarah Braun. "A lot of concealed steel holds the back of the house up, and where the new extension meets the existing building, careful millimeter perfect detailing was required by the builder." Despite adding only 10m² to the property's footprint, the extension has revolutionised the floorplan, facilitating the construction of a large, light-filled kitchen and dining space, with a separate, hidden pantry.

The whole house has been upgraded with new plumbing and electrics, insulation to the roof, new triple glazed windows, and the removal of old plaster in the ceilings that had been flood damaged. Underfloor heating is now on the lower ground floor and a more economical gas boiler was installed. Conservation specialists were also brought in to reinstate period details.

Collaborative approach

The works were extensive, as the house was stripped right back to its bones. Nicole and Paul decanted to a flat 10 minutes' walk away while the work was ongoing. "I haven't done a large-scale project like this before," says Nicole. "I really loved working with Stuart and Sarah and we collaborated on everything together. I would send them loads of pictures of things I'd seen and paint swatches."

As an artist, the right mix of colours was an important aspect for Nicole. "I'm looking at colour all the time – I wanted earthy and calming hues that made the house feel like it flows as one," she says. "Stuart and Sarah were great. At times I thought I must be driving them crazy sending them photos of tables, light fittings, everything! The amount of decisions is absolutely endless on a big project, but we'd all discuss it and come up with the best solutions."





This close collaboration meant that every detail of the project, from the colour palette, furniture and soft furnishings through to lighting strategies was meticulously thought out. The main idea was not to follow any trends and to make the spaces as classic and timeless as possible. As Nicole and David intend to stay here for the rest of their lives, they saw this as a golden opportunity to create somewhere that they wouldn't need to refresh or update in the future. "I had lots of pieces from my parents and grandparents, and

different artworks, so it was important that the new interiors could take that," says Nicole. "I like the mix of old and new – the idea that some things look they've been there forever and some things look new. I am really happy with how it came out."

Perfect result

The experience of living in their newly revamped house compared to the 'tired' and storm-damaged home of 2020 is night and day.

closer look

Creating cohesion...

Although originally Georgian, the house had been extended in the 19th and 20th centuries, so a challenging part of the project was determining how the new addition would interface with the existing building and its multiple architectural styles. A specialist conservation builder removed pebbledash to reveal lots of different brick, so this surface was lime rendered to form a seamless bridge of colour and texture between the brick finishes on either side. A detailed window repair proved to the planners that no harm was being done to the building. Plus, the three-slot windows within brick piers differentiate the existing house and the modern interventions. Frameless glazed sliding doors lead to the garden, creating a direct connection that hadn't been there previously. Painstaking detailing was required to create a flow to the connections to the different elements of the design – every measurement had to be perfect.



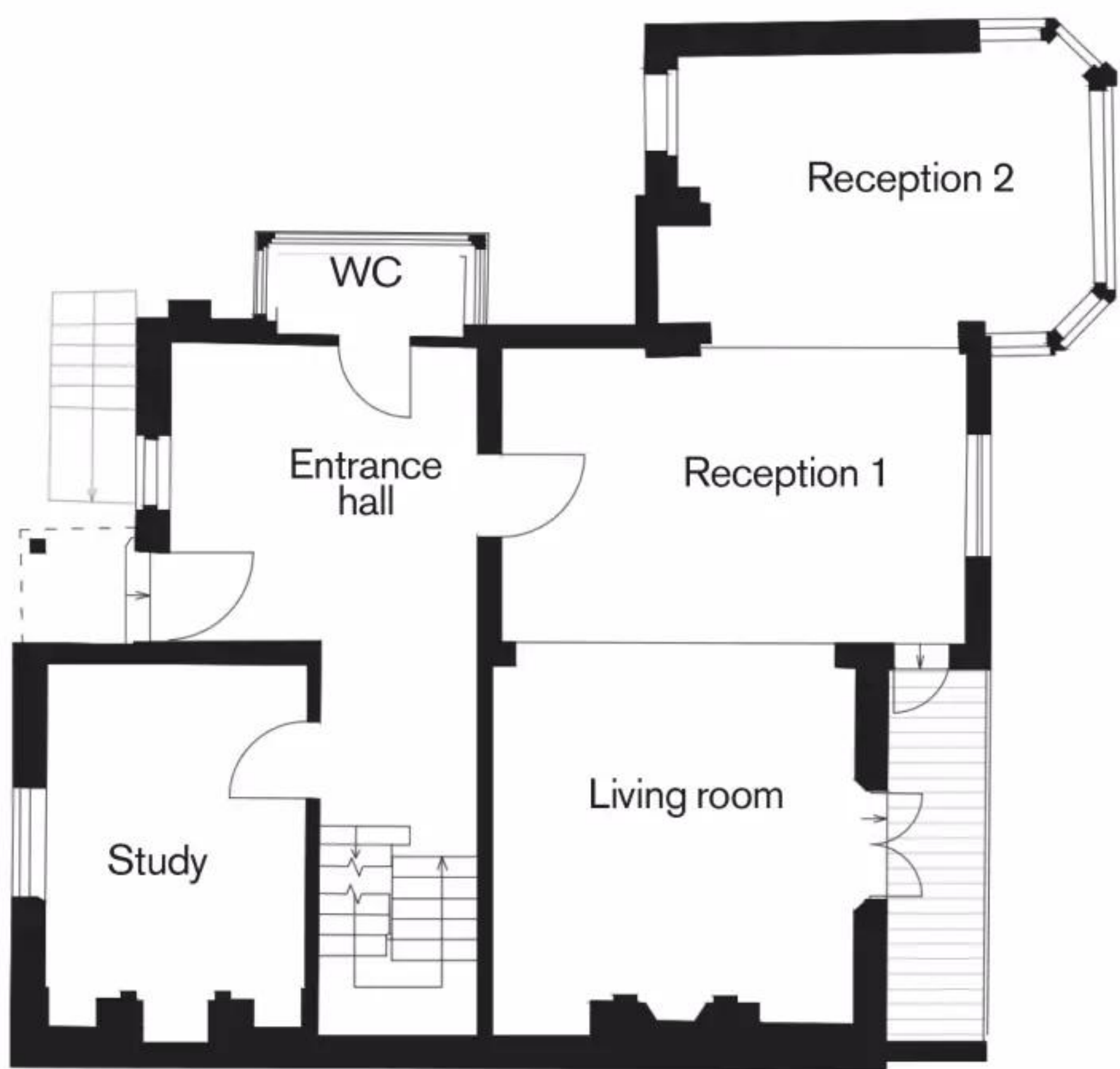


Floor plans

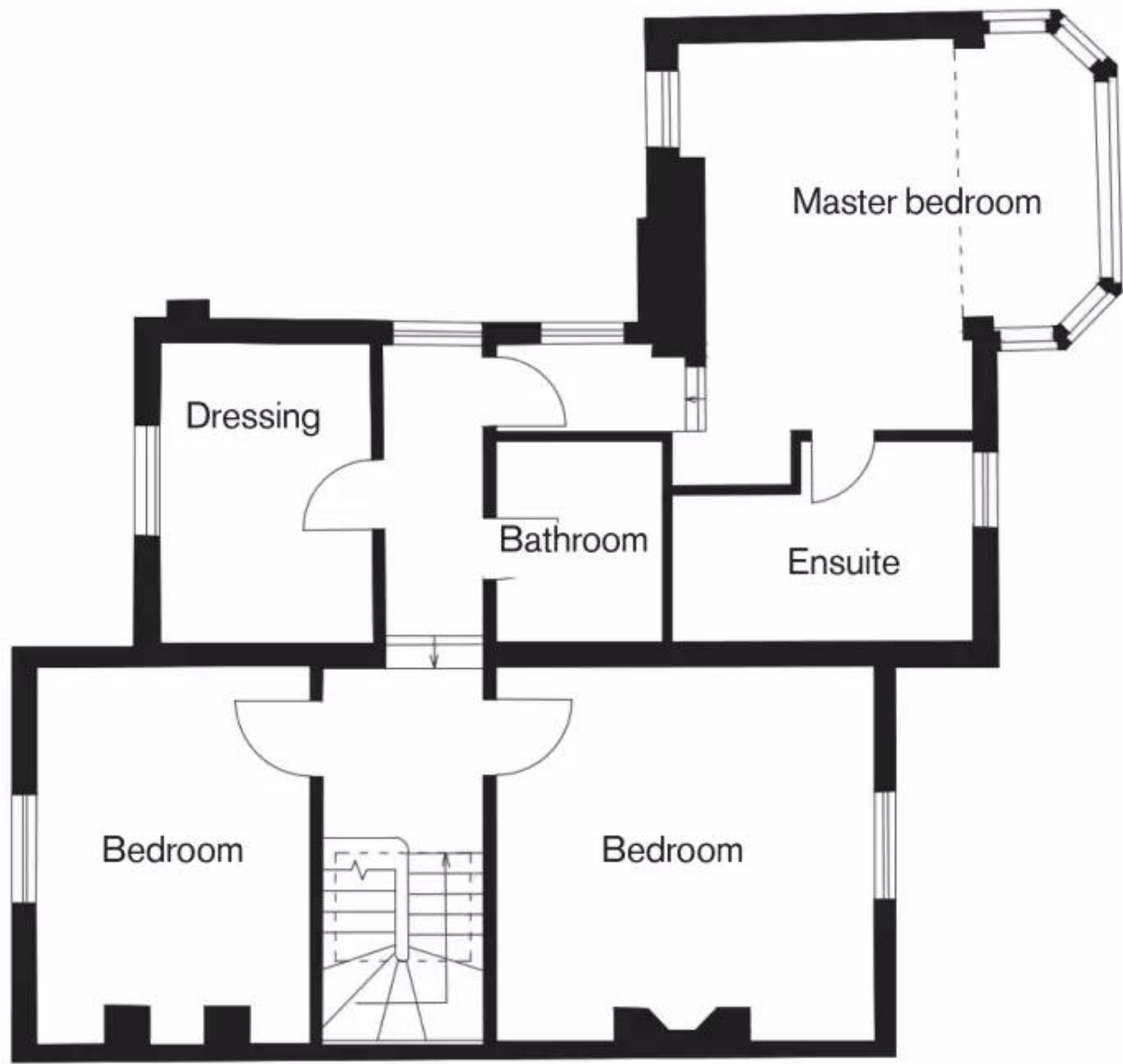
Lower ground floor



Upper ground floor



First floor



“Although I had really wanted the first modern glass extension we had in mind to go ahead, what we have now is so much better and more interesting, as the remodeling divides the spaces up really well. Each area feels different yet connected,” says Nicole.

“It’s not a big extension, but the way the light comes into that space and the doors open up to the garden is beautiful. We have a lovely green outlook now, too. And clever details, such as putting rooflights in the floor of the balcony, also creates a much better quality of light and brings sunshine right into the heart of the kitchen. I’m so glad we went with this in the end.”

Nicole’s favourite space in her reworked property is the new dressing room, which was previously a box room used mainly for storage. “It’s pure luxury and means we no longer have a large wardrobe in our bedroom, so that now feels so airy and spacious.” Now, every time Nicole steps inside the house, she breathes a sigh of deep satisfaction. “Our home has been rejuvenated and the project has rekindled our love for the property.”



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£175	7%	£43,685
Foundations	£93	3%	£23,205
External walls & windows	£374	14%	£93,419
Roof structure & covering	£68	3%	£17,116
Internal walls	£19	<1%	£4,638
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£364	14%	£91,054
Joinery & fittings	£558	21%	£139,550
Plumbing & Heating (incl bathroom & kitchen)	£224	8%	£55,944
Electrics	£211	8%	£52,695
Decorating	£180	7%	£45,017
Fees	£280	10%	£70,000
External Works	£142	5%	£35,524
Grand total			£671,847

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts



ARCHITECT Archer + Braun Architects 020 3488 2692 www.archerandbraun.com **FURNITURE, FIXTURES & EQUIPMENT** Freddy Antell Interiors 07958 533774 www.freddyantell.co.uk **STRUCTURAL ENGINEER** Simple Works 020 4566 9571 www.simple-works.co.uk **CONTRACTOR** Trendhomes 07903 831491 www.trendhomes.uk **PLANNING CONSULTANT** Turley 0161 233 7676 www.turley.co.uk **AUDIO VISUAL & SECURITY** Integrated AV 01372 365057 www.integrated-av.co.uk **CONSERVATION BUILDING RESTORATION SERVICES** WPD Productions 020 8885 1515 www.wpdproduction.com **WINDOWS** Velfac 01480 759510 www.velfac.co.uk **SLIDING DOORS** Cortizo www.cortizo.com **BRICK CLADDING** BEA 01487 825020 www.beabuildingproducts.co.uk **KITCHEN** DeVoi 01509 261000 www.devolkitchens.co.uk **WORKTOPS** Rossi Stoneworks 0208 826 5724 www.rossistoneworks.com **FLOORING** Russwood 01540 673648 www.russwood.co.uk **Claybrook** www.claybrookstudio.co.uk **Archi-tile** 01536 211545 www.archi-tile.co.uk **BATHROOM & SANITARYWARE** Water Monopoly 020 7624 2636 www.thewatermonopoly.com **CP Hart** 0345 600 1950 www.cphart.co.uk **LIGHTING** Atrium 020 7681 9933 www.atrium.ltd.uk **Pinch** www.pinchdesign.com **Rothschild & Bickers** 020 7359 5817 www.rothschildbickers.com **Vitra** www.vitra.com **Bert Frank** www.bertfrank.co.uk **BLINDS & FABRIC** House of Hackney www.houseofhackney.com



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BUILDING ON THE EDGE

Adrian and Erika Evans' smart, sustainable dream home defies the elements on the Cornish coast

WORDS **ALEXANDRA PRATT** PHOTOS **SIMON BURT**

The sea has played a leading role in Adrian Evans' life. A keen sailor, he lived in Brighton for many years, until an opportunity to create a new home from scratch just metres from the sea in Cornwall came along. Famous for surfing, messing about in boats and family holidays, this stretch of coast is a popular destination. "I've always wanted to self build and few plots in the country are this close to the beach," says Adrian. "We just wanted to make the best of it." And the result certainly does just that – a stunning four-bedroom contemporary eco home with a terrace and balcony that enjoys outstanding, uninterrupted views across a perfect sandy beach.

Adrian's family spent time in this location after his mother bought a bungalow overlooking the beach in the 1980s for £115,000 – a price tag that, 36 years ago, demonstrates the popularity of this spot. Yet, by 2018, the bungalow had been sat empty for several years. Rather than sell up, Adrian bought out other members of his family with the aim of self building in its place to enable a move to the county. "You don't often get the opportunity to build on a prime plot 10m from a beach," he says.

With a stepdaughter studying architecture and his partner Erika, an experienced self builder, by his side, Adrian had access to plenty

of knowledge. So, when the height and material restrictions for new homes in this area of outstanding natural beauty (now known as a National

Landscape) came into play, it didn't phase Adrian, who was happy to agree on a planning application for a property with a pitched roof.

In the meantime, a neighbouring pub complex also gained planning permission for a redevelopment that included flats and shops in a contemporary design that pushed past height restrictions. With this as precedent, Adrian went back to the drawing board. Working with local practice CFD Architects, he successfully submitted another application, this time for a taller, flat-roofed home that was more in tune with his and Erika's design preferences. "We wanted a contemporary, square, minimalist design," he says.

Adrian was hoping for a large, modern living area and a low-maintenance home. Getting the outside space right was also

FACT FILE

NAMES Erika & Adrian Evans

OCCUPATIONS Adrian is a Chief Information Officer

LOCATION Cornwall

TYPE OF PROJECT Self build

STYLE Contemporary

CONSTRUCTION METHOD ICF

PROJECT ROUTE Architect with management contract, plus builder

PLOT SIZE 400m²

LAND COST Already owned

HOUSE SIZE 233m²

PROJECT COST £748,126

PROJECT COST PER M² £3,211

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED January 2022

BUILDING WORK TOOK 16 weeks



Above & right: The location of this plot right next to the sea in north Cornwall was a huge point draw for Adrian. The ICF construction is a robust answer to the extreme location on the Cornish coast

important. Instead of a traditional lawn, he's got a landscaped garden with terracing, a barbeque area and plenty of outdoor seating. He's also squeezed in a patch of practical grass, a large shed and a workshop. "We also have a large balcony upstairs with a beach view, so don't feel we're missing anything," says Adrian.

The design is focused away from the development next door. As there are no windows on that side of the building, every view brings that extraordinary coastline right into their home. While some self builders would have been tempted to reverse the levels and put the living spaces on the first floor to maximise those views, Adrian resisted. "It's due to privacy," he explains. "The plot is next to a beach road and public footpath, so we if we were spending all our time upstairs, we'd always be on show."

Hands-on management

Once the final application gained permission, building work didn't start for a year. Their neighbour had also decided to rebuild her home, so they agreed to demolish both bungalows together, saving money and reducing the inconvenience. The couple's neighbour built her new home first. "Her builder, Bazeley Construction, did a good job," says Adrian, who managed all the budgets himself. He wanted a quality local builder rather than a property developer and,



after interviewing several firms, felt his neighbour's builder was exactly what he was looking for. Adrian ensured there were no surprises in the costings either, agreeing on a detailed specification and RIBA-built contract at the start. This included non-standard approaches, such as shadow gaps rather than architraves, which are a popular choice in pared-back contemporary designs.

With their builder responsible for sub-contractors, Adrian and Erika remained in Brighton during the year-long build, visiting the site every month. They also benefited from a build management package with their designers, CFD Architects, which ensured professional oversight of the project. "Paying for a building



manager was the best thing we did, and really helped to keep things on track,” says Adrian.

The groundworks presented a challenge. With granular material such as the sand on this plot, strip or pile solutions would mean having to go with extra deep foundations, pushing up the costs. Opting for a raft foundation instead mitigated the need for these and expensive piling. This solution effectively floats on the ground, just like a raft would on water.

Building up from the foundations, the house is made from ICF (insulated concrete formwork), which infills stacked blocks with concrete. His architect specified this system as a response to the coastal location and the excellent energy rating it can achieve. “We have a 98/100 rating for efficiency, which is A*,” says Adrian.

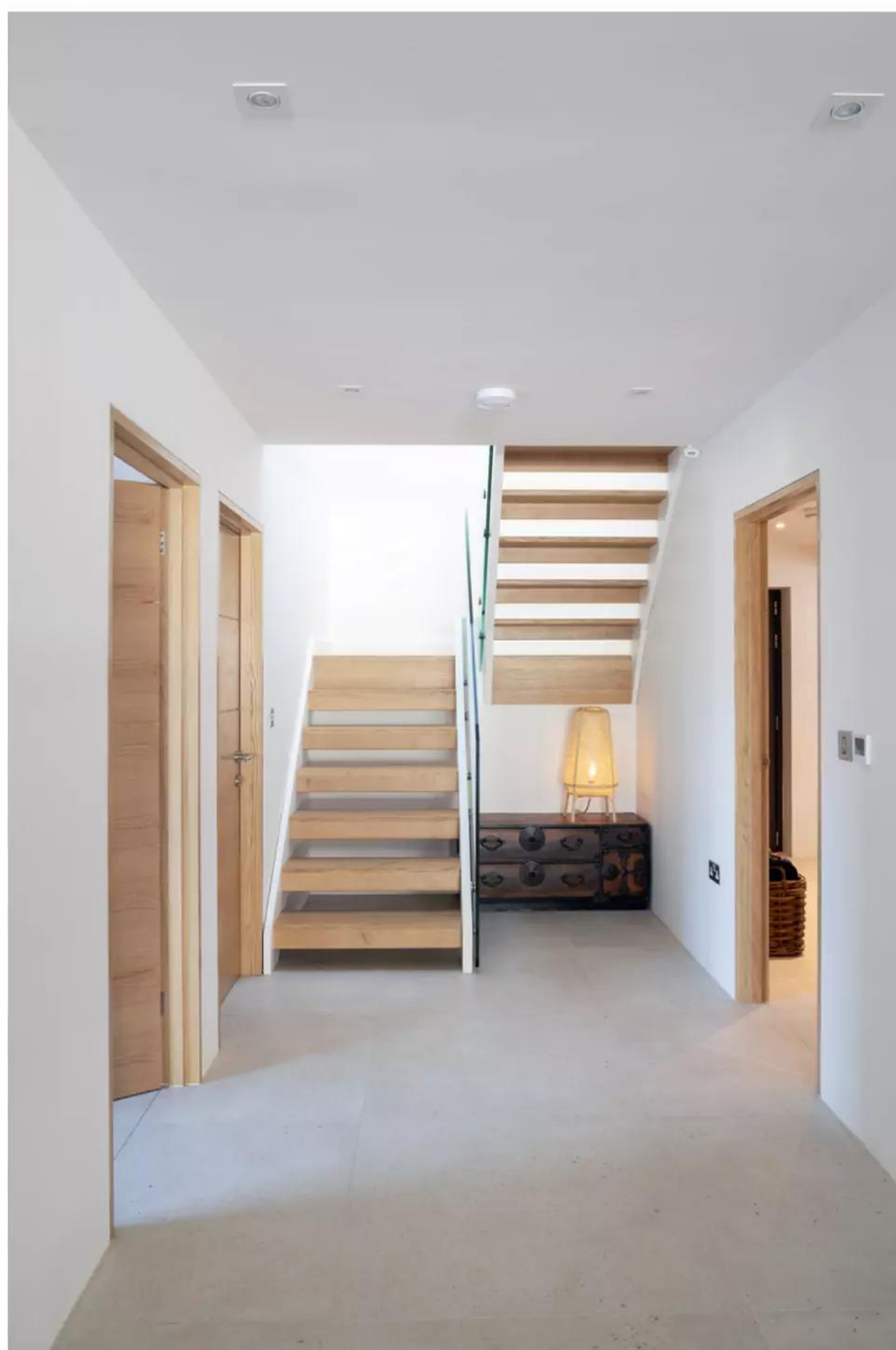
High-tech details

Energy efficiency was important to Adrian, who prioritised a sustainable heating setup powered by renewables. This requires a suite of the latest technology. The property’s flat roof boasts 20kW of solar PV panels, facing east and west. These feed into a Tesla PowerWall battery and the two EV chargers. “We would love to have more battery storage,” says Adrian, as energy bills are still around £150 a month on average, dropping to £60 per month in the summer.

The highly-insulated home is warmed by underfloor heating that’s fed by an air source heat pump on the flat roof. To keep the interiors fresh, a mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) system circulates fresh air and expels the stale air without losing heat.

This high-tech approach is mirrored by the property’s smart home systems. All the exterior doors are electronic, including the pivot door at the front, operated by a key-card security system, which can be opened with a smart watch. There is CAT6 high-speed ethernet network cabling for security cameras, TV and bandwidth-intensive

Above: All the glazing is 25mm thin frame aluminium from Origin, capable of withstanding the high winds of a coastal location





The kitchen has high-quality appliances and countertops made from Silestone, a quartz-based composite that is durable and scratch and stain-resistant



devices. "I thought we might as well," says Adrian. "There are no second chances here, and wifi-only systems can be unreliable."

Sleek interiors

The interior style is reflective of the contemporary architectural design. The uncluttered, neutral palette turns every window into a seascape and the solidity of the house creates a warm, acoustically calm atmosphere. Adrian chose a beam and block for the first-floor construction to ensure better soundproofing.

The open-plan kitchen/dining room has a large island, featuring Silestone waterfall sides. The kitchen is by German manufacturer Nolte, fitted with the highest quality appliances, such as the Fischer & Paykel double fridge, double sinks, integrated Miele induction hob and a double oven. Large-format Fioranese Italian porcelain





floor tiles are a practical choice when there is so much sand around. “It’s a very family-friendly place,” says Adrian. “We suddenly have a lot of relatives and friends wanting to visit.”

The bedrooms are carpeted, while the bathrooms, which Erika designed, hit all the right notes for low-key luxury living. Choosing sanitaryware from Lusso and matching scalloped Fioranese tiles for splashbacks, they’ve installed a freestanding bath, shower trays flush to the floor and shower fittings that can be accessed without stepping into the shower (a great suggestion by the plumber to avoid that unpleasant first blast of cold water).

Only a couple of hiccups

In a build organised this well, only the genuinely unexpected could cause a hiccup. In this instance, the global political landscape of the



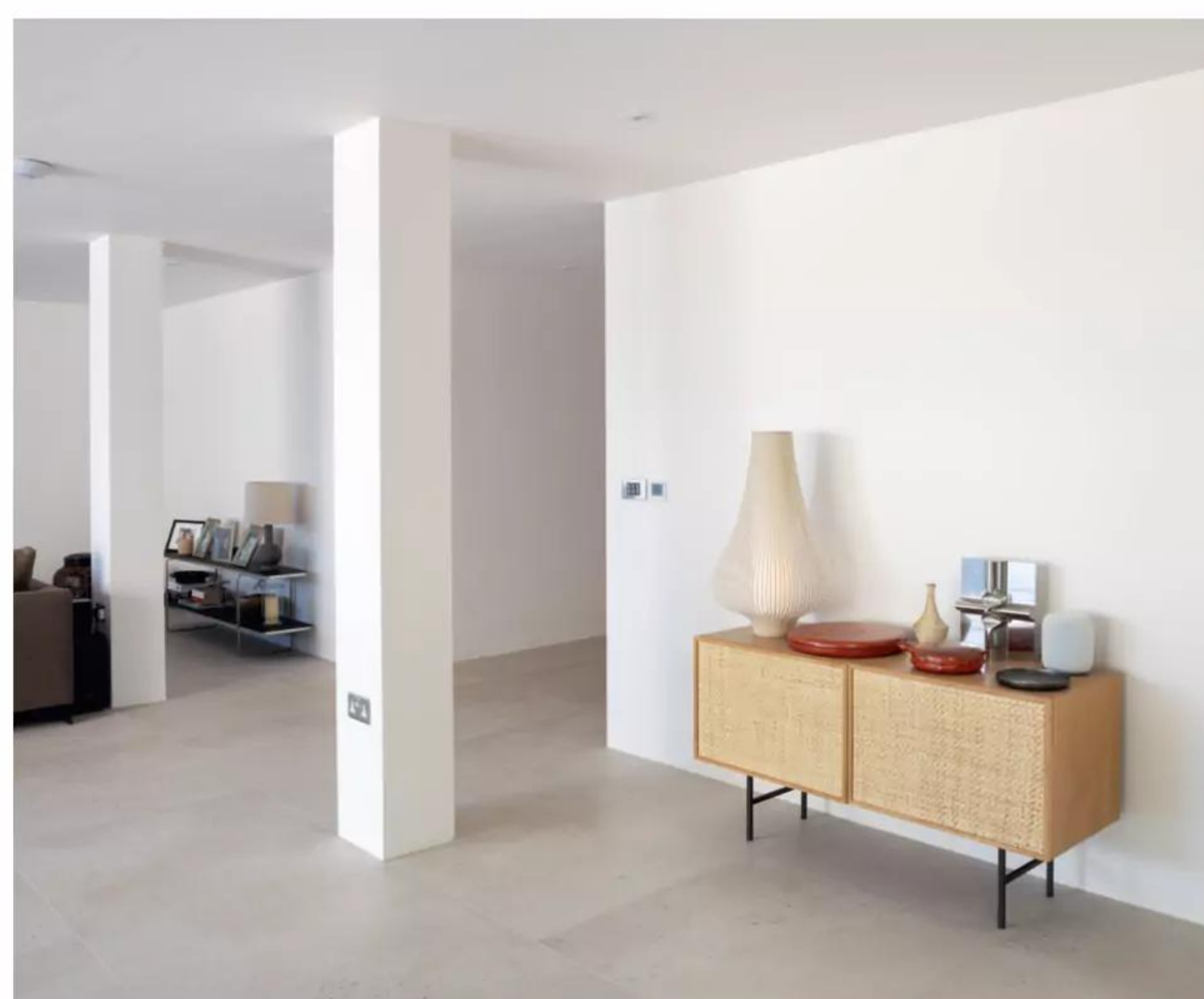
WE LEARNED...

KEEP CONTROL OF BUDGET. The prices agreed with your builder often don’t specify the level of detail or quality of fittings, such as floors, doors or architraves, so be involved in the details and note what things cost. For example, we wanted electric roller blinds that disappear into the ceiling – they had to be built into recesses and that extra detail had to be costed in.

BE SAVVY WITH EXTRAS. We really wanted to keep on track with our initial goals and stay on budget, so were always careful with spending. In the end, we came in only 8% over budget.

HAVING A PROJECT MANAGER from our architecture firm was the best thing we did. They were highly experienced and could communicate between us and the builder.

SHOP AROUND for the right level of finish and look ahead. Think about the location of sockets and network cables; there are no second chances! We have spare electric cables throughout and extra network cables for future electronic locks and connectivity.





Above: The sea view from the master suite is one of Adrian's favourite things about his home

Left: Erika designed the bathrooms, which have sanitaryware from Lusso Stone

period caused some delays. "The ICF bricks were coming from Canada on a Russian ship, which was blockaded," he says. This required a re-think for the supplier and a few adjustments, as the alternatives were slightly thinner but still as effective.

Another slight issue came when photos, sent to Adrian who was in Brighton, showed the new cedar cladding looked varied in colour. He made an unscheduled trip to Cornwall and after some planks were replaced, the situation was resolved. Overall, the couple are

very happy with the result. "I'm really pleased the builder stuck to his quote and worked with us to produce excellent finishes," he says. "The build took just over a year and there's been no major snagging."

Now that they are living in their new self built home, Adrian and Erika are really enjoying their house as well as being based in the south west. "I love the space we have here, and the cost of living is cheaper," he says. "It's great just being able to sit in bed and watch the waves through the window. I feel closer to nature and the sea."

closer look

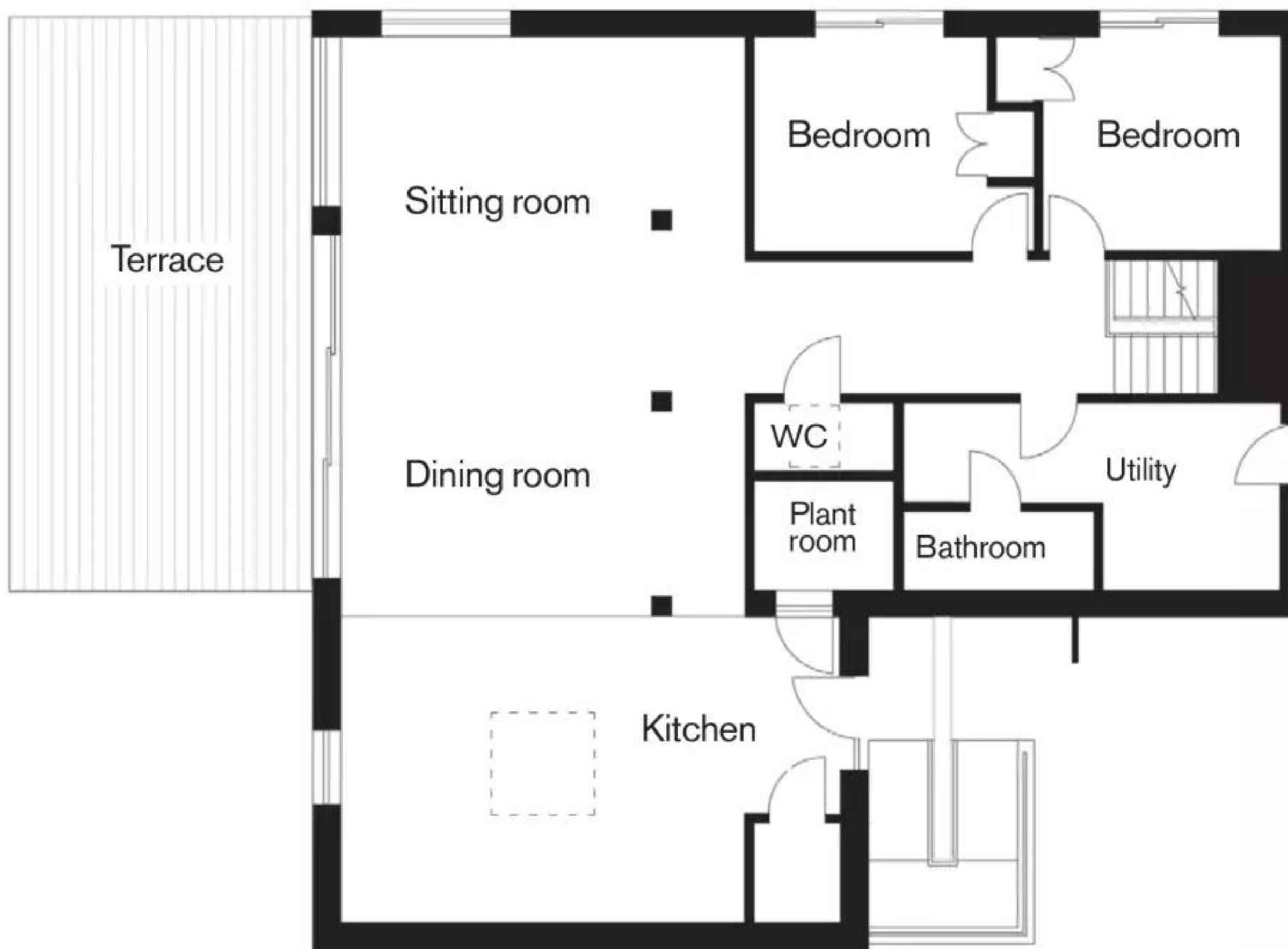
Building an eco home with ICF...

Architect Andy Lolley designed Adrian and Erika's home to be constructed using ICF (insulated concrete formwork). This is a solid system that requires two walls of insulating blocks (usually polystyrene or Woodcrete) stacked and interlocked without mortar. Concrete is then poured into the central cavity between the two layers, which creates a strong airtight and highly insulated home. Whilst Adrian's home isn't a certified Passivhaus, it works to this eco standard's principles. For instance, there is reduced thermal bridging in the structure and an airtight envelope. In this project, as is often the case with ICF, the as-built airtightness test exceeded what the design set out to achieve. Another advantage is the build speed of this construction method, which can continue even in winter weather. This construction method is also incredibly robust, with high waterproofing potential – a key design principle with a house close to the coast.

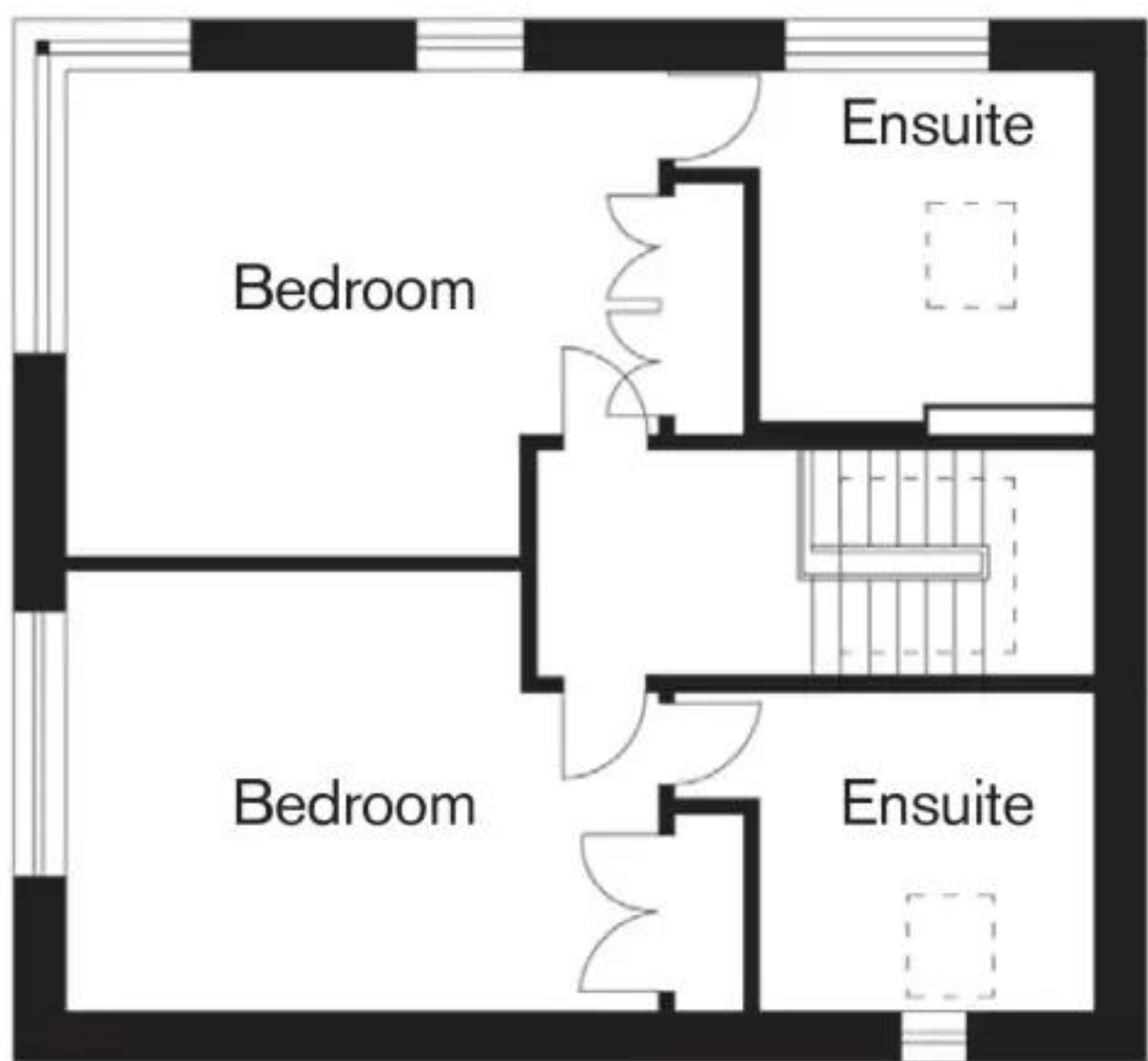


Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m ²	Cost %	Total cost
Architect	£142	4%	£33,033
Planning	£4	>1%	£912
Management	£60	2%	£13,881
Building work	£2,541	79%	£592,167
Electrical	£117	4%	£27,145
Interior	£62	2%	£14,562
Blinds	£41	1%	£9,500
Exterior	£86	3%	£20,000
Legal	£5	>1%	£1,186
Regulatory	£4	>1%	£964
Solar & battery	£137	4%	£32,000
Self build warranty	£10	>1%	£2,286
Services	£2	>1%	£492
Grand total			£748,128

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **CFD Architects** 01752 297421 www.cfd-architects.co.uk **BUILDER** **Bazeley Construction** 07970 102785 www.bazeleyconstructionltd.com **SELF BUILD WARRANTY** **Self-Build Zone** 0345 230 9874 www.selfbuildzone.com **GLAZING & SLIDING DOORS** **Horizon** 01903 850052 www.horizon-windows.co.uk **ELECTRONIC BLINDS** **Westcountry Blinds** 01736 752397 www.westcountryblinds.co.uk **SOLAR & BATTERY** **Naked Solar** 0330 236 9650 www.nakedsolar.co.uk **FLOOR & BATHROOM TILES** **North Coast Tile** 01208 618992 www.northcoasttilecompany.co.uk **SANITARYWARE** **Lusso Stone** 020 3370 4057 www.lussostone.com **BATH** **Duravit** 01908 286680 www.duravit.co.uk **KITCHEN** **Future Kitchens** 01872 240909 www.future-kitchens.net **FRIDGE** **Fisher & Paykel** 0800 088 6605 www.fisherpaykel.com



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52 **ACHIEVING GOOD AIR QUALITY**

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Achieving good air quality

Rebecca Foster explains how the construction materials and ventilation strategy you choose can support the health of you and your home, and offers tips on how to improve air quality

Above: The Unico System is an all-in-one, centralised system that provides air purification, heating and ventilation to the whole house. Typically, the main air handling unit is installed in the attic, connected to supply tubes that branch off from the central duct to discreet outlets in each room

Above right: MVHR was specified for this house in Wiltshire, designed by Artel31, to help manage internal air quality

The desire to build a home that facilitates occupant wellbeing is at the heart of many people's self build and renovation plans. When you consider that the average person takes between 20,000 and 30,000 breaths per day, it makes sense that establishing good indoor air quality should be at the core of any strategy to create a healthy home. Unless you've taken proactive steps to manage the quality of what you're inhaling, however, it could be that the air inside your home is even more polluted than what you're breathing outside, potentially contributing to a raft of health issues including respiratory conditions, allergy flare-ups and skin complaints. But why? That's what we'll investigate here, as well as exploring the options for how to enhance the quality of the air inside your property.

Indoors vs outdoors

In the drive to create energy efficient homes that retain warmth, modern houses – quite rightly – need to incorporate a good amount of insulation and airtightness measures to deliver low-carbon winter comfort. The flip side to this is that the ventilation strategies we once relied on to keep a flow of air moving through the house, including poorly sealed windows, doors and other gaps in the building fabric, are a thing of the past. "Our homes can no longer breathe, and the



On this extension project by Iguana Architects, a green roof was chosen for its aesthetics and to improve air quality by acting as a natural filter



cling film effect occurs, creating bad indoor air quality,” says Clarissa Youden, associate director at Total Home Environment. “The resulting rise in humidity increases not only mould growth, but also the dust mite population – a worry for asthma and allergy sufferers.”

If we factor in off-gassing materials on top of poor ventilation, it's possible that the air inside our homes is potentially more toxic than what we inhale outdoors. “Standard construction materials are not designed to consider the impact on the occupants' health and wellbeing,” says Collette Raine, architect and creative manager at PAD Studio. “Standard adhesives in joinery, paints and stains emit harmful VOCs (volatile organic compounds) and toxins into the internal environment.”

As well as damp, humidity and airborne pollutants, additional contributors to indoor air pollution can include cooking, smoking and even household cleaning products. But it's not all doom and gloom; if you're building a new house or renovating a fixer-upper, there are numerous opportunities to make steps towards better indoor air quality, both through the products you choose to kit out your home and the ventilation strategies you incorporate.

How to manage air quality

First and foremost, establishing a breathable building fabric will minimise issues with condensation and damp from the outset. If you're self building, that translates into choosing a construction system that provides a vapour permeable fabric and will therefore allow moisture to migrate out of the structure, rather than sealing it inside where it can cause problems with condensation and mould. Left unresolved, condensation can cause untold damage to the structure of your home, so it's always best to design it out from the start.

The next thing on our air quality hit list is VOCs. Volatile organic compounds are toxin-containing nasties that are off-gassed by many standard construction materials. They're found in everything from paints and adhesives to carpets and upholstery, which means they can easily be inhaled. Minimising products that give off these harmful compounds lays the foundation for establishing good air quality.

“Natural materials are the best starting place, substituting standard paints and plasters with lime-based alternatives,” says Collette. Paint is one of the biggest culprits when it comes to its negative impact on air quality. “Interrogate the brands you're looking at, do your research and don't be afraid to ask. Look out for lime-based paints such as those from Rose of Jericho, natural plasters such as Clayworks and paper plasterboards such as Honext,” says Collette.

And it's not just the finishes that'll make a big difference to your house's internal air quality – many insulation products contain high levels of VOCs, too. Choosing a non-toxic alternative such as mineral wool, recycled newspaper, wood fibre or cork board can help you balance your thermal performance goals with good air quality.

A breath of fresh air

Of course, the most obvious way to ventilate your home is to open the windows to invite a fresh stream of air inside. “This provides natural airflow and is considered ‘free’ ventilation, requiring no energy input,” says Richard Soper, CEO at The Unico System UK. If you're designing your house from scratch, strategically positioning openable windows,

CASE STUDY

Establishing a haven that prioritises the physical and mental wellbeing of occupants was at the heart of this self build, designed by PAD Studio. The owners took a fabric first approach to construction, with a high level of insulation and triple glazing to minimise heat escaping via the structural envelope. The airtight shell of the building remains breathable, reducing condensation risk, while purge ventilation is delivered via strategically placed windows and rooflights, which are carefully positioned to maximise the flow of air. A mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system provides continual ventilation and extracts stale air from the house, while recapturing warmth from the outgoing supply.

Healthy materials are used throughout the house to minimise the risk of the harmful off-gassing that you'd get from some standard construction goods. “Through-coloured lime plasters, such as Clayworks, don't require painting as the plaster's integral pigmentation provides the finish,” says Colette Raine from PAD Studio. The clay absorbs toxins and pollen from the air and provides a naturally low-carbon alternative to gypsum plaster. “Gypsum plasterboard can have a significant negative impact on air quality, yet it's a specification area people often overlook,” says Colette.



This healthy home was designed by PAD Studio. It features a range of non-toxic finishes, including through-coloured lime plaster on the walls



doors and rooflights throughout the building is a relatively straightforward way to create an effective cross flow of air that'll help purge high concentrations of pollutants.

Yet it's worth bearing in mind that this approach is not controllable, plus it relies on the quality of the external air. “It may work well in milder climates, and we all tend to open windows at night during the warmer months of the year,” says Richard. “The drawbacks arise when expensively heated air is allowed to escape through an open window and when exterior airborne pollutants can enter a living space.”

In traditional homes, trickle vents and extractor fans (in the bathroom and kitchen) also play a part in ventilating the property – but this still might not be enough. “Even if trickle

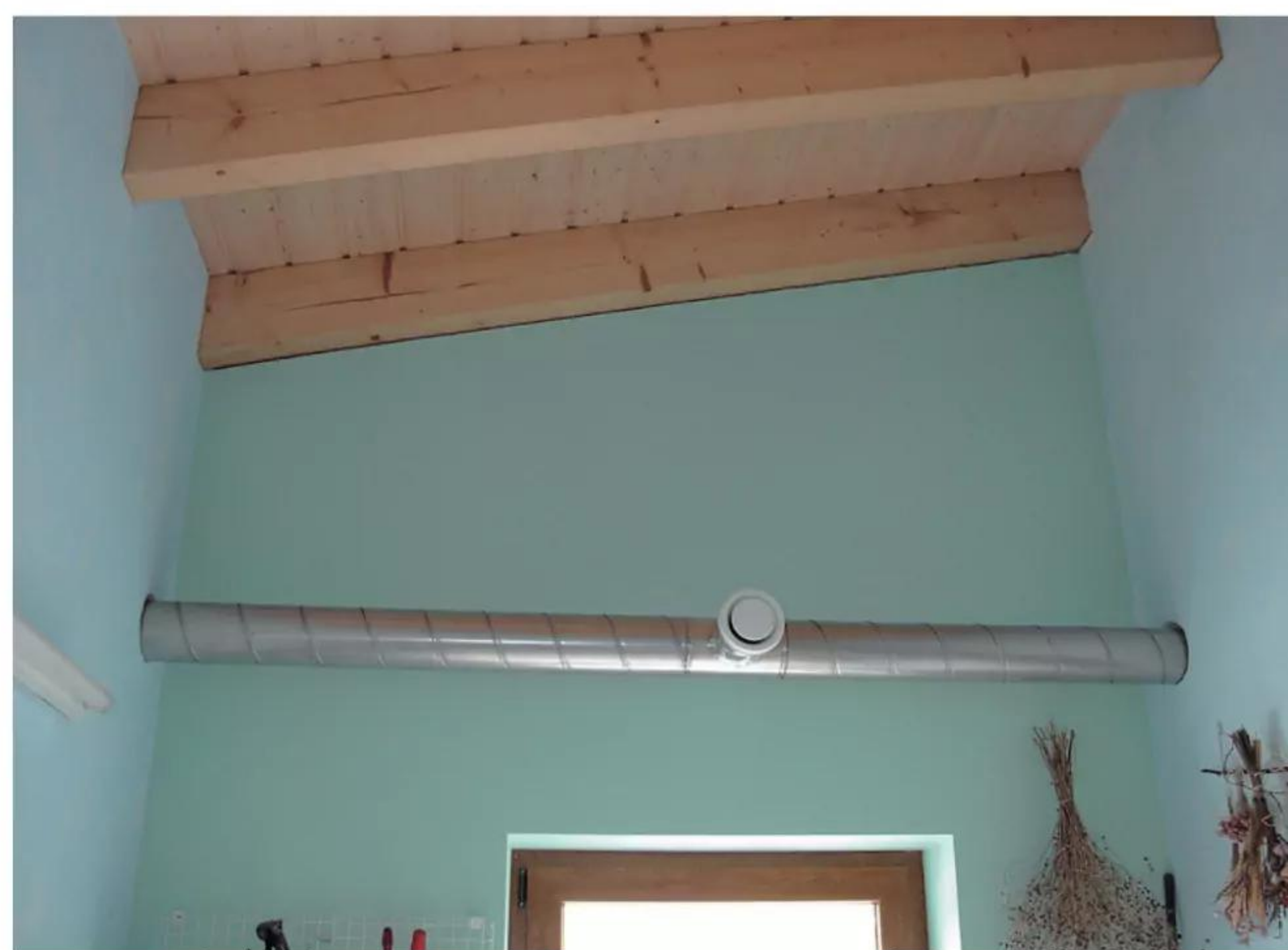
Above: The Unico System's discreet outlets deliver a fresh supply of conditioned air into each of the rooms in this sleek, modern home – without detracting from the minimalist interior design

QUICK & EASY WAYS TO REDUCE AIR POLLUTION

- Carpet can hold onto allergens, so it's important to regularly vacuum to get rid of any irritants buried within the fibres. If you have pets at home, old hair they've shed and dander can be carried indoors, too, so Hoovering regularly will help you stay on top of things.
- Drying wet clothes inside increases the risk of damp and mould, so where possible, it's best to hang them outside. If you need to dry your washing inside, be sure to open a window or consider using a dehumidifier to suck up the moisture from the air.
- Cooking produces grease, smoke and various smells, as well as moisture. A good quality cooker hood and extractor can help clear the air of particles that evaporate as you cook and prepare meals. If you have an MVHR system, you'll need to specify a recirculating downdraft extractor.
- Don't rely on plants. While some have air purifying properties, the amount you'd need to make any real difference to internal air quality is substantial, and they'd need to be kept in optimal condition, too. If you're after a portable solution, a compact air purifier might go some of the way in helping to filter out harmful contaminants instead – and will probably have a bigger impact than a peace lily. But centralised ventilation is the ultimate in air quality.



Blueair's 3-in-1 air purifier delivers clean, purified air, at a rate of 78m² per hour. It comes with several different modes, including heating, cooling and boosting purification



Top right: Even the best self builds need modernising at some point – including this 1980s gem by legendary self build architect Walter Segal. MAP Architecture consulted with Jon Broome – one of the build's original experts – on its extension and refurbishment. Non-toxic materials, such as wood fibre insulation, help ensure good air quality inside the building

Above right: In this house, the MVHR ducting supplied by Total Home Environment has been left exposed to establish an industrial aesthetic

vents are kept open (they're often shut because they let cold air in during winter) this form of ventilation won't work well when there isn't a suitable difference in air temperature/pressure between inside and out, as there simply won't be any air movement," says Clarissa. "Even with extractor fans pulling air from the wet rooms, they aren't on for long enough to provide adequate ventilation for the whole house."

This is where controllable HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) and mechanical ventilation and/or heat recovery solutions come in. Modern HVAC arrangements take an all-in-one approach to providing heating, ventilation and cooling, delivering filtered fresh air, ideal humidity and complete climate control. The best setups offer a fully integrated means of delivering temperature consistency and air quality throughout the home. Good quality systems, properly installed, will operate efficiently and quietly at all times, without the need for large, space-hogging radiators or wall-mounted air conditioning blocks.

The Unico System, for instance, offers accurate climate control via a centralised system with outlets on the walls and ceiling. These are designed to complement your home's decor, without the need for clunky wall-mounted units or big fans. If you're thinking of going down the HVAC route in your project, it's worth discussing this with your architect and builder at the design phase of the project, as well as engaging with potential suppliers as early as possible.

"It's essential to engage HVAC and indoor air quality professionals in the design phase," says Richard. "This will help ensure the most appropriate and complete long-term solutions are achieved for heating, cooling and ventilation."

Mechanical ventilation and heat recovery offers another potential route. This type of setup extracts stale air and introduces a fresh supply via a whole house network of ducts and supply/extract points in each room. Simultaneously, it extracts warmth from the outgoing channel of air and recycles it by re-introducing it into the incoming stream. So, as well as helping to purify the air in your house it can minimise the overall heating load, too. "Having heat recovery negates up to 95% of the heat being lost; instead it's recovered back into your home, saving up to a third on heating bills," says Clarissa from Total Home Environment. "By dehumidifying the air, MVHR can also be used to reduce the perceived air temperature within your home."

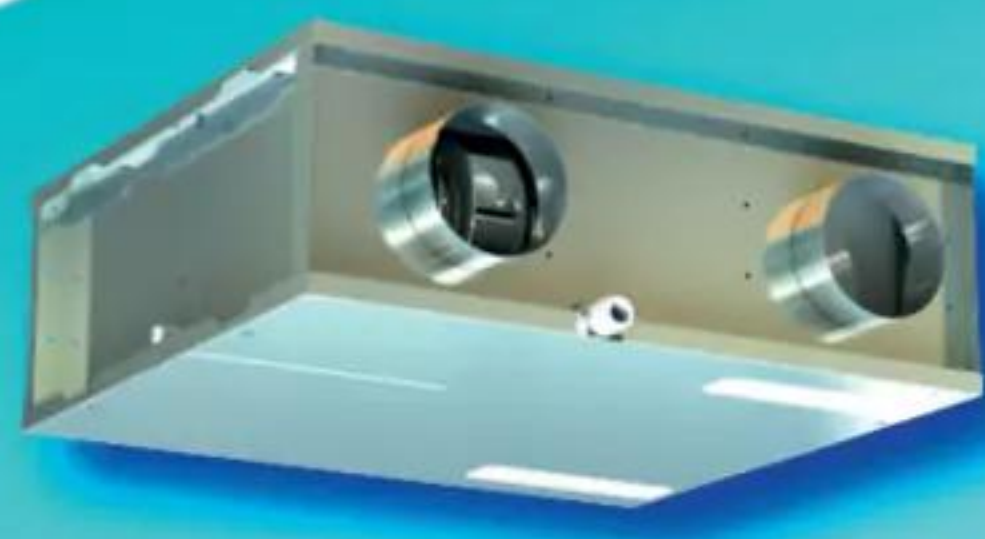
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Upgrading a staircase

Kate Sandhu reveals how you can boost your home's aesthetic, comfort levels and safety by upgrading this key design feature

Above: These stunning stairs were beautifully refreshed by David Smith St Ives. Stripping back the original spindles and banister, they've been reimagined with fresh materials to give them a modern look

When we think about staircases, it can be tempting to see them as merely a functional structure to help us navigate between one floor and another. The reality is that staircases are far more than this: in fact, they're critical architectural element that shapes the flow, functionality, and aesthetic of your home. Whether you're updating a tired-looking flight, planning a complete repositioning, or futureproofing for a loft conversion, tackling the staircase can bring surprising benefits and can have a huge impact on your home and its interior. That said, it is not a light undertaking. From spatial logistics to Building Regulations, there are plenty of practical considerations.

In this guide, we'll explore the full spectrum of staircase renovation – from easy changes through to complex repositioning – offering design inspiration, cost insights and expert advice to help you make informed choices.

Simple refreshes

Let's start with the basics; sometimes a staircase doesn't need a complete overhaul to feel new. If your existing flight is sound and safe, cosmetic changes can deliver

a big visual return for relatively little investment. You can absolutely tackle some of these elements yourself, should you feel confident enough to take them on. Although it might be a little fiddly and time consuming, it can be incredibly satisfying at the same time.

Swapping dated spindles for sleek metal uprights or minimalist glass panels can help modernise the look and open up light flow. Timber handrails can be stripped, restained or painted for a fresh feel. Painting treads (the part you stand on) and risers (the vertical part of the step) in bold or contrasting tones can add instant personality (though be prepared that paint may wear over time with traffic) – and a runner adds softness, grip and style.

Tread cladding is another option if your staircase is structurally solid but isn't that appealing to look at. For a classic look, you can cover existing steps with engineered timber or even luxury vinyl. This works especially well in homes where you're coordinating with new flooring and want to tie the whole look in to create better cohesion.

Lighting can also play a big role in making your staircase stand out. Adding LED strips along the handrail or low-level riser lights can create a dramatic evening effect and improve safety. That said, this would typically only look at home in a more modern dwelling.

Costs can be tricky to estimate as they will vary vastly depending on size of the project, materials used and even location of the house. For example, hiring a professional painter typically costs over £200 per day, while cladding

the existing steps could range from £1,000 to £2,500. If you're looking to save money, some tasks can be done yourself – such as painting the staircase or stripping the old paint – which can significantly reduce costs. Additionally, upgrading to new handrails and glass balustrades could cost up to £2,000.

Replacing or repositioning an existing staircase

When the staircase location no longer serves the layout – or worse, becomes a safety concern – it may be time for more radical action. Replacing or moving a staircase can transform how you live in your home, unlocking new potential and improving both access and flow.

When is it worth relocating a staircase? Often in older properties, staircases were tucked into corners or partitioned away, limiting headroom and making upper floors feel disconnected. In these cases, a central repositioning can improve sight lines, make upstairs rooms feel more integrated, or create space for a future loft conversion. Alternatively, relocating the stairs may be necessary to open up a kitchen-diner or to link previously separated living spaces.

Planning ahead is crucial. If you're considering a loft conversion – now or in future – staircase position will impact the entire configuration. The new flight must meet headroom requirements (a minimum of 2m at the centre line, under Building Regulations) and not compromise existing rooms. Even if the loft project is years away, factoring the next flight into your stair design now can save costly rework later, so it's worth thinking ahead.

Building Regulations will apply when you're moving a staircase, changing its pitch or altering its structure. That said, while simply redecorating or changing balustrades may not trigger compliance with current regs, anything structural will – including replacement with a new staircase, repositioning or material changes that affect performance (like removing a handrail).

Designing the right staircase for your home

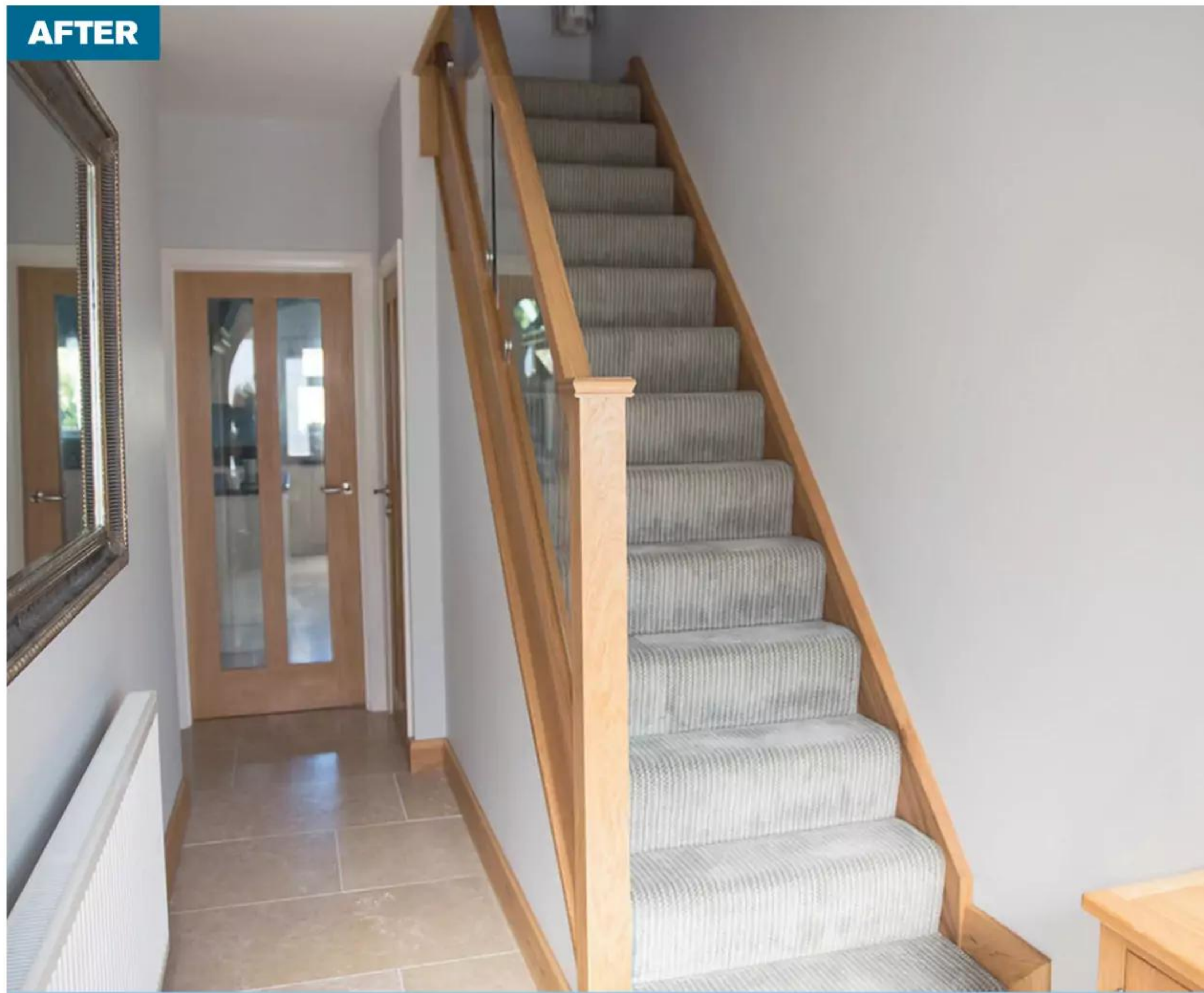
Staircases are sculptural elements that deserve design attention. Whether you prefer traditional elegance or minimalist modernism, the market now offers an extensive range of bespoke and modular options. However, it is worth considering how they fit with the overall aesthetic and design of your home.

For period properties, timber staircases with turned spindles and carved newel posts can echo original details while allowing for updated finishes to be incorporated. If you have a more contemporary home, try opting for open-tread flights, floating cantilevered steps, or combinations of glass, steel and timber to match your modern style.

Space-saving staircases, such as alternating tread or spiral designs, may be permissible for loft access or in very tight areas, but these often come with restrictions – for example, only being allowed to serve a single room.

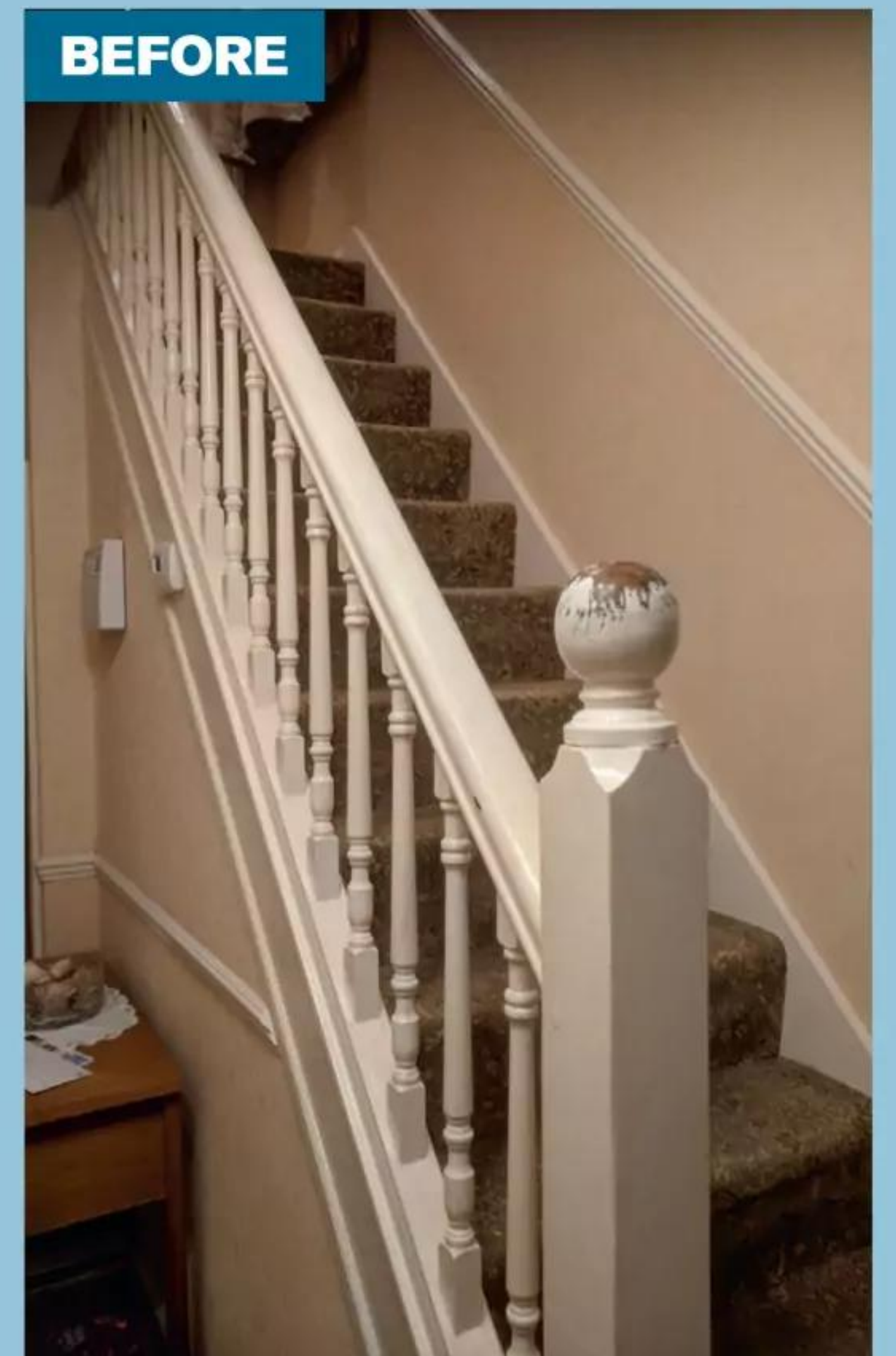
For open-plan homes, a feature staircase can act as a striking focal point. Consider a sculptural spiral in steel or a helical staircase to really add some visual drama. But remember: these bespoke designs often come with longer lead times and heftier price tags.

AFTER



Homeowner Mr Proctor used Stairbox to help transform his staircase. Set within a 1930s semi-detached property, the flight was dated and in need of a refresh. “When thinking of ways to improve the hallway, stairs and landing, a new glass balustrade on the flight was the first thing that came to mind,” says Mr Proctor. With a clear vision for his renovation, Mr Proctor hired Alex from ADH Carpentry and Joinery to do the works. “The newel posts were all replaced, and then we added an oak and glass balustrade on the stairs and landing, while the strings and stairwell were all clad in oak,” says Alex. Finally, a thick, plush, carpet was added, tying the stairs in with the rest of the house. “Now that the renovation is complete, it has really opened up the space,” says Mr Proctor. “It’s so much lighter

BEFORE

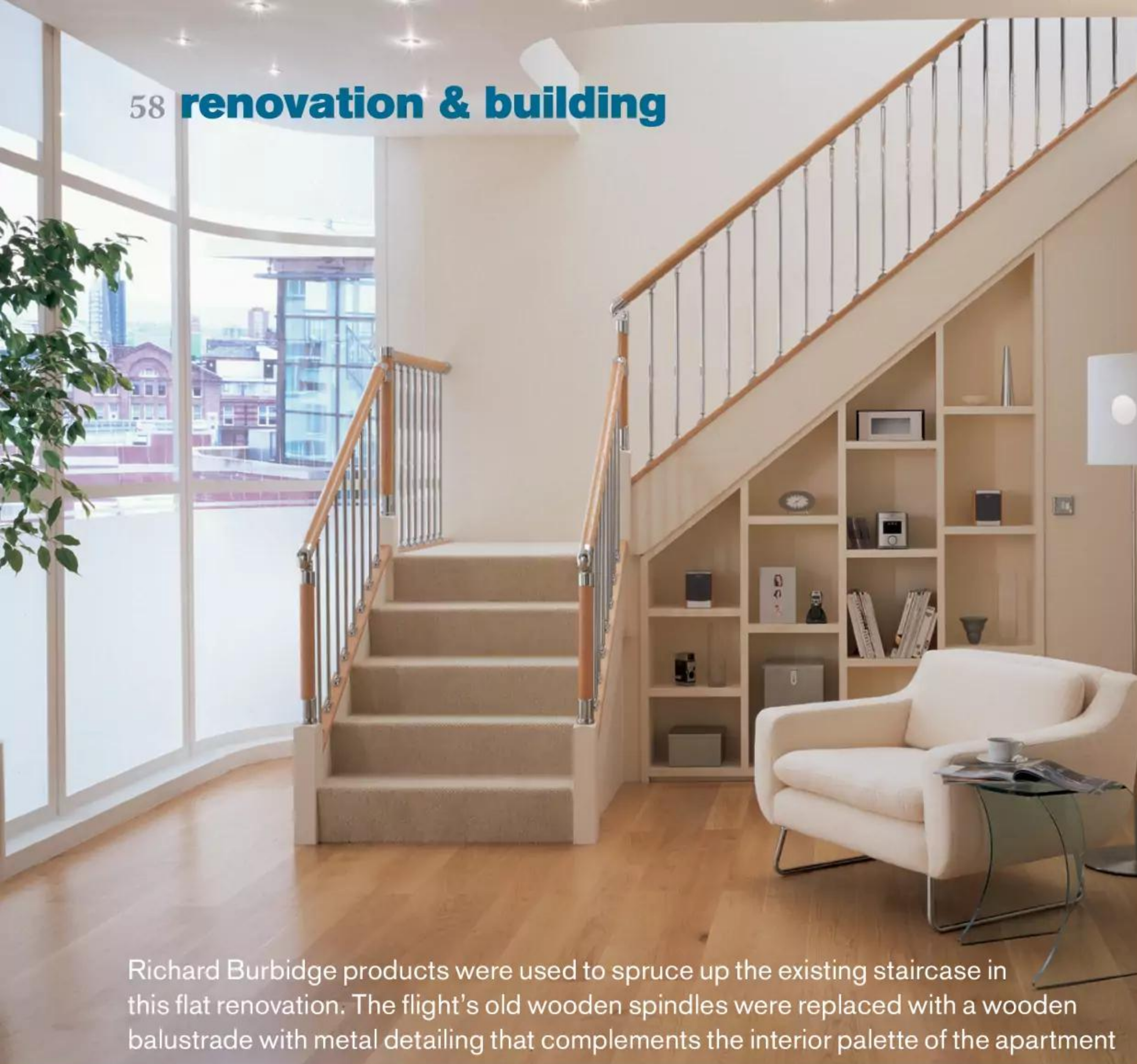


and brighter in the hallway and landing than before.” The whole staircase refurb came in at around **£1,164** (including delivery).

Costs will vary depending on material (glass and metal will be more expensive than wood) size and design complexity. Off the shelf flights made from softwood come in at between **£1,200 - £2,500**, while bespoke hardwood options can be **£4,000 - £10,000**. High-spec feature staircases, typically those made from glass and steel, are at the top end of the market, costing **£10,000+**. There's also the labour cost of removing the original flight and making good to factor into your budget.

Structural & practical considerations

Repositioning a staircase is never a standalone job. It can affect adjacent rooms, floorplans and structural walls – so expect knock-on works and plan for them in your budget.



Richard Burbidge products were used to spruce up the existing staircase in this flat renovation. The flight's old wooden spindles were replaced with a wooden balustrade with metal detailing that complements the interior palette of the apartment

BEFORE

Above: This unusual staircase was unloved, with basic plywood treads and a carpet which needed replacement. Kloepping TSS replaced the treads with solid oak to give the staircase a new lease of life that will last decades. The total cost for refurbishment was £3,400 + VAT

AFTER

If you are moving a staircase you will most likely have damage to the current location, meaning you may need to replaster and redecorate across multiple floors. In addition, you will need to create a new structural opening for the relocated flight, which can in itself be complex.

If this is the case, you may need to include:

- **Reinforcing or adapting floor joists to accommodate new openings.**
- **Rerouting of plumbing, electrics or ducting around the new location.**
- **Adjustment of landings or installation of new balustrades.**
- **Applying for Building Control approval, which you will need before commencement.**
- **Checking if your project might be impacted by party wall regulations.**

All of this means the job typically involves joiners, structural engineers, and possibly an architect or designer. You may also need planning permission in listed buildings or conservation areas. Expect at least two weeks on-site for a typical replacement, and longer for bespoke or repositioned flights.

QUICK TOP TIPS

Here are some handy pointers when renovating your staircase to help you avoid costly mistakes or unnecessary delays.

WHEN TO REPLACE:

- If treads are creaky, uneven or unsafe.
- To improve access or headroom.
- If you're altering the floorplan or adding a loft – even if these might be on the cards in the future, it's best to plan for the stair position now.

DESIGN DECISIONS:

- Choose materials that complement your interiors & period of your home.
- Keep it open and airy in smaller spaces.
- Consider who will use the space; small children or elderly residents may struggle with a steep spiral staircase, for example.

REGULATIONS TO REMEMBER:

- Minimum 2m headroom on main stairs (1.9m for lofts with sloped ceilings).
- Maximum rise (height) per step: 220mm; minimum going (tread depth): 220mm; stair pitch under 42°.
- Handrails required on one side (both if a flight is greater than 1m wide).
- Building Regulations can be slightly different across different local authorities, as each nation has devolved responsibility for them – so always check the latest applicable rules at the earliest opportunity.

Benefits beyond aesthetics

Putting time and money into altering your staircase is about much more than simply appearances. It can allow for greater access and flow between different levels, improve your home's safety, increase natural light levels and futureproof your property for mobility or loft access.

Ultimately, a staircase can elevate your renovation from functional to transformative. Along with the hallway, it is the one item that flows throughout a home. So, although it's a feature of a property that some might overlook, it should be a core consideration in any build or renovation to ensure it contributes to a showstopping transformation, creating impact and improved flow throughout.

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KATE SANDHU

Kate Sandhu is a renovation pro, helping others to understand the process and save as much money as possible via her home renovation course. She shares a wealth of knowledge, as well as DIY tips via her blog renovatelikekate.com and Instagram account [@renovatelikekate](https://www.instagram.com/renovatelikekate)

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HOW TO futureproof a heritage home renovation

Period property and conservation expert Alan Tierney explores smart ways to modernise and add future flexibility to an older house – without losing its character

It's often assumed that heritage homes have reduced scope for futureproofing. While most will have some limitations to help protect their character and some of the practicalities can be more difficult than modern buildings, there will always be plenty that can be done to sympathetically and effectively update to your property.

Futureproofing is not just a desirable feature of a renovation; it is a central tenet of building conservation. The time scales involved in old buildings are very long – this doesn't just relate to the past but projects into the future to give buildings continued viable use. This is the most important factor in ensuring their long-term survival.

Appropriate adaptation is strongly encouraged. If a building is listed, then it is a recognised justification for alterations and should be a positive factor in obtaining Listed Building Consent. Any renovation will involve some loss or damage to the history of the building. It's important to make sure that this happens as rarely as possible to prevent erosion of its character, so the aim must be for any project to have the longest possible viability.

Climate mitigation

Traditionally constructed buildings, with thick solid walls and permeable fabric, are well equipped to cope with increasingly extreme weather caused by climate change.

Their high thermal mass moderates large temperature changes, avoiding overheating during heatwaves. Because the breathable fabric naturally absorbs and releases moisture, it can cope better with occasional saturation from flooding than most modern fabric.

Reinstating as much of this breathable performance as possible isn't just good for the building but a major futureproofing benefit. Plasterboard and most modern insulation are only fit for a skip after flooding – lime plaster or render will usually dry out with minimal damage.

Services

Most heritage homes in need of major refurbishment have outdated and inadequate services – a complete start from scratch is needed. This is a major opportunity to futureproof. Much of the gain you can make comes in the initial design process. Overspecification and planning for the future will pay dividends. Additional cabling and

Above: Mailen Design (www.mailendesign.com) restored this dilapidated agricultural barn in the heart of south Oxfordshire. The project blended a conservation approach – deconstructing and meticulously rebuilding brickwork using traditional lime plaster, for instance - with modernisations such as smart home technology and solar panels to deliver a characterful long-term home

WHY SHOULD I FUTUREPROOF MY HOME?

The term futureproofing denotes longevity, so thinking about how to improve durability and quality is key when making alterations:

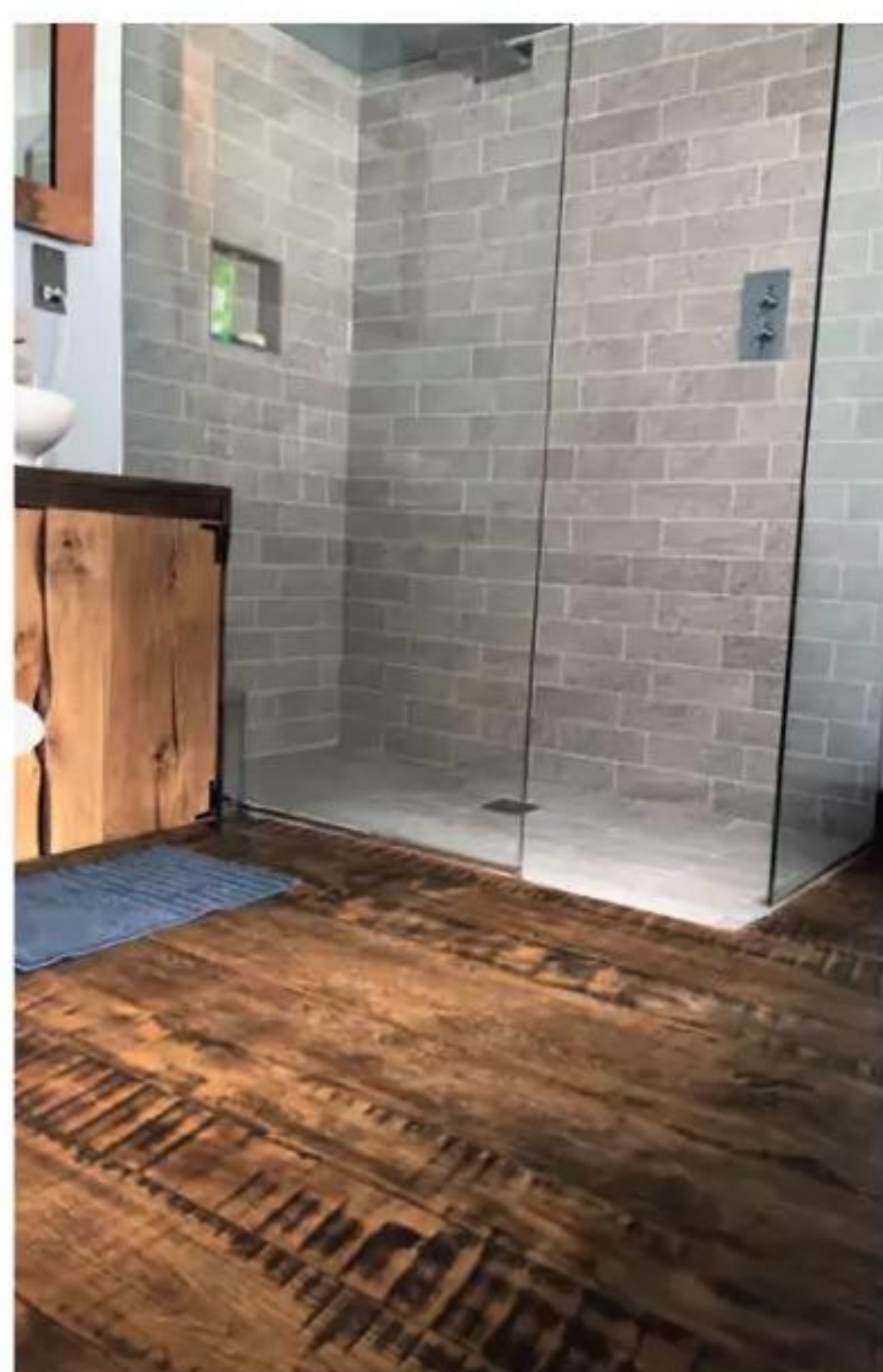
- Favour long-lasting natural materials.
- Try to think of service life in generations not decades.
- Design for ease of maintenance and repair.
- Avoid unproven technology or materials.
- Work with the building to find solutions that will last.
- Maximise the natural longevity of the building.
- Benefit from inherent performance advantages.



Above: Isolair Multi is a wood fibre insulation board from Pavatex, available from Unity Lime (www.unitylime.co.uk). It is supplied in an easy-to-install tongue-and-groove profile and can be used in retrofit applications, without the need for additional breather membranes

Right: Designing a walk-in shower with ample room to manoeuvre is a great way to ensure your home is comfortable and easy to use as your needs change

Far right: If you are having difficulty running new cables for light switches, you can install wireless units for ease



pipework has minimal cost compared to making changes in the future. A simple example is to put in more sockets than you need. Think about future requirements for rooms – if you might convert a roof space or add bathrooms in the future, make provision for it now.

Finding routes for cables and pipework can be difficult in old buildings because there was no provision for them originally and there's likely to be sensitive fabric that should not be damaged. However, there will almost certainly be areas where inappropriate modern interventions need to be removed and replaced with breathable fabric. If walls are stripped of cementitious plaster or render, services can be run before replastering with lime or clay. If solid concrete floors are removed and replaced with a breathable floor it opens up routes for pipes, cables and underfloor heating. These modern interventions might influence the siting of sockets etc to avoid cutting chases in sensitive fabric.

Thermal performance

If a house is to be futureproof, it must be comfortable to live in, in the long term. With solid wall buildings, the most important factor is to ensure solid walled buildings is that they are dry. To make certain of this your renovation must attend to gutters and downpipes as well as reinstating the breathable performance of the external walls.

Next is airtightness. You should address any air leakage you can find around windows, doors, chimneys and any gaps in the structure. It should be possible to minimise noticeable draughts and heat loss. There will

still be sufficient background air infiltration to maintain a healthy indoor environment (a significant plus point for old buildings). Good extract ventilation in kitchens and bathrooms and breathable insulation – mainly in floors and roofs – should complete your futureproofing needs.

Heating

Indications are that the future of heating is electric. Even if sticking to gas is a pragmatic short-term solution, it's sensible to ensure that your electrical installation is capable of supporting heating provision in the future. In many cases a switch to electric heating as part of the renovation will be the best future-proofing option. Usually that means a heat pump, though there are other options such as dynamic storage heaters. Provided the underlying thermal performance work has been done, the constant, low-level heat provided by these systems, especially with underfloor heating, works well in traditional buildings, benefitting from the high thermal mass.

Technology

This is a tricky area to futureproof because of the speed of innovation. The best approach is to focus on high-quality background infrastructure to enable you to operate the front-end tech you want as time goes by.

Power is presumably always going to be required; this feeds into the services considerations I've mentioned previously. For the foreseeable future, distribution of data and internet capability around the house is likely to be the basis for most tech. WiFi penetration in old buildings with thick walls is a long-standing problem, so putting in extenders or mesh systems and hard-wired connections are all good futureproofing options.

Accessibility

Thinking of your future needs as you get older could enable you to stay in your renovated home much longer. Old buildings can be awkward in this regard but there should be some opportunities during the project.

Floor level changes can be a real challenge but, if solid floors need to be replaced, some equalisation of finished levels might be possible. To help this, floors can be laid to a slight fall – 50mm or so across the width of a room is almost imperceptible. It might be possible to replace any step that remains with a ramp instead.

If a staircase needs to be replaced, consider making the new one wider and shallower with good handrails. If space allows, maybe make provision for a future lift.

If you're installing new bathrooms, fit walk-in showers with plenty of space around them. When planning use of rooms, consider future conversion of a downstairs room into a bedroom and the provision of a wet room.

ALAN TIERNEY



Alan is a period property and conservation specialist. He ran a historic building consultancy, offering hands-on advice to the owners of heritage homes, and has recently completed his renovation of Old Barnstaple House.



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In conversation with...

NSBRC'S HARVEY FREMLIN

Build It's Chris Batesmith chats with Harvey Fremlin about what's new at the National Self Build & Renovation Centre and why you simply must make the time to visit this invaluable educational resource

Opposite page:
The NSBRC is
packed with
educational
exhibits designed
to help you on
your self build or
renovation journey,
including several
full-size homes
to explore

If you're embarking on a major home project and you've never heard of the National Self Build & Renovation Centre (NSBRC) then, whatever you do, keep reading this feature! Located in Swindon, the NSBRC is the UK's only permanent venue designed to provide advice and inspiration for self builders and renovators. Launched in 2007 by BuildStore, which remains a founding exhibitor, the NSBRC has been an employee-owned business since 2014 – and it continues to go from strength to strength, thanks to an invested team passionate about delivering a high-quality experience for visitors.

One person who's seen much of that journey first hand is managing director, Harvey Fremlin, who lives and breathes the centre. "I joined in January 2008, and later that week was given a cake with one candle to celebrate the first year of the NSBRC," says Harvey, whose background includes a stint as a jobbing actor and as a labourer for his uncle. "I've knocked up the muck, kept sites tidy, laid bricks," says Harvey. "All the things self builders can actually do themselves to save time and cost, if they want to get hands on and engage with their projects."

In his early days at the NSBRC, Harvey was on the trade card team – an initiative designed to bring self builders together and use their group buying power to access discounted materials. "People really valued the trade card," he says. "It gave them confidence about engaging with suppliers, especially those who were more nervous about going into a builder's merchants without a dented van."

UPS & DOWNS

Confidence is something that comes up several times over the course of our chat, and it's something both the NSBRC and Build It – which is the long-standing media partner for the centre – are keenly focused on. We share a goal to give self builders and home renovators an authoritative, impartial



“We want more people to be aware of self building and have confidence that they can do it”

gateway into the inspiration, research, expert support and product guidance they need to enjoy project success.

"Even to this day, most people who visit the centre have never stepped on a building site before," says Harvey. "We have various educational zones to help them visualise what the journey will be like and the key decisions they'll need to make. Most quickly realise the importance of having a team of individuals around you who can give you quality advice." Those hubs include the New Build Journey (guiding you through the process of building a home); Renovation House (a full-scale replica of a 1920s property in need of modernisation); zones for walling, roofing, groundworks, finishes etc; and the Trade Village consisting of over 200 exhibitors at the cutting edge of self build and renovation.

Harvey's own pathway took him to a role in the NSBRC's business development team, aiming to deliver the right blend of exhibitors for the Trade Village. Come 2014, however, a new operating company was in place and unfortunately made some poor spending decisions, leading to a rocky period for the centre. But, as every self builder will know, challenges are there to be overcome. The business needed reinvigorating, and its employees stepped up to the plate. "What came out of that was a core

team of colleagues who worked in the centre and really loved what they do,” says Harvey. “At that time, we were introduced to a specialist investor, Capital for Colleagues, which supports businesses that are already in – or are prepared to transition to – employee ownership.”

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In the decade since, the NSBRC team hasn't looked back. “Employee ownership has been transformational; enabling us to produce an open, transparent business plan that we all own,” says Harvey. “We shifted to doing fewer things better, engaged with trusted partners like Build It and put more focus on education and giving people the best information to remove barriers when they embark on a project.” Investment was also channelled into the centre, such as switching to LED lighting to provide a professional, well-lit and more energy efficient environment.

Sustainability has become a golden thread running through everything the centre does. “Our tagline is ‘better sustainable homes’, which spans people motivated by wanting to do the right thing by the planet and the right thing for their wallet in reducing consumption and bills,” says Harvey. “We talk a lot about the building fabric, as do the majority of our exhibitors – designing out energy usage in the first place inevitably reduces bills.”

As of this year, 87% of the business is now owned by its employees. It strikes me that there's some synergy between running a small, employee-owned business and delivering a major home building project – most notably in the team's drive and passion for every aspect of what they do. “We want more people to be aware of self building and have confidence that they can do it; and there's plenty of room for it to grow in the UK,” says Harvey. The NSBRC is a hub for that wider self build community. “We're part of a sector that's enthusiastic about helping people achieve their goals,” says Harvey. “Our exhibitors give advice freely based on their own experience, and will recommend other experts for visitors to talk to if they can't help.”

GOING RETRO

The regulatory push towards net zero carbon may be mostly focused on new build housing at present, but retrofit is the next big area to address – and something forward-thinking homeowners are already engaged with. The NSBRC will soon be a go-to location for those looking to upgrade the performance of their existing property.

“We're building a new Retrofit Zone at the moment, which will launch in October as a sister to the Renovation House,” says Harvey. “This will feature three L-shaped cross sections representing different types of property: a Victorian terrace; a solid stone-walled house; and a 1980s new build that's suddenly 40+ years old and decidedly tired.” The idea is to showcase the best ways to improve performance, while recognising that budget and lifestyle are important factors. “Just like with self building, compromise is often the word,” says Harvey. “You have to decide what's most important to you.”

The NSBRC will always be dedicated to people who want to find a plot of land and develop a fantastic home on it; but there are, of course, many of us who want to extend and improve our existing homes. The Retrofit Zone will showcase accessible advice and new solutions to help



LEADING THE WAY

A recent milestone for the NSBRC was achieving B Corp status, a rigorous assessment process that verifies a business meets high standards of transparency and accountability, making a positive impact on employees, communities and the environment. Much like self builders exploring new materials and technologies, the NSBRC is an early adopter – becoming one of only 2,500 B Corp companies in the UK.

“For me, it boiled down to three things: businesses looking after their employees, the community (both local and the sector), and the climate,” says Harvey, who spent around seven months on the process, alongside colleagues Amanda Russell and Nick Whant, filling in reports and evidencing everything. “Employee ownership was a bit of a superpower for us, helping us to achieve a score of 124.7 [80 is a pass], which we believe is the highest in the South West.”

Many of the changes the NSBRC has implemented to help achieve such an impressive result chime with areas self builders and the wider construction industry are working hard to address, too. “We've made significant reductions in our waste output and improved recycling, for instance, and we're very mindful of energy consumption – of our small team of 21, seven now drive electric vehicles,” says Harvey. “It's about taking the lead and bringing people with you. We know of three companies involved with the centre that have gone on to become employee owned, and we hope that by becoming B Corp fairly early, some of our exhibitors might look at it seriously.”



you do just that, opening up the centre to a new audience. “We're here six days a week all year round, for people to use as and when they want to – and our mission is to help you develop those fantastic homes,” concludes Harvey.

The NSBRC is the UK's only permanent venue for self builders and renovators. Open six days a week, it offers a variety of educational zones and exhibits; a continuously-manned expert helpdesk where you can tap into impartial guidance; a range of courses and workshops covering everything from planning permission to project management, eco homes and more; plus three two-day shows each year where you can meet industry experts and discover the latest products and solutions for your project. Visit www.nsbrc.co.uk to find out more.

With quick turnaround times and cost-effective packages, factory-manufactured houses can tick a lot of boxes for self builders. **Scarlett Deamer** explores the ins and outs of going down the prefab build route

BENEFITS OF

Offsite-manufactured homes

Above right: This Meisterstueck-Haus project was completed for a cost £465,000. The two-week house shell assembly, fully-finished externally and ready for first fix, was integral to a speedy build

Below right: The WeberHaus system features large panels that come premade with insulation, plasterboard, wiring and glazing in place, ready to be assembled on site by their expert team



Offsite-manufactured homes are transforming the way we build. Instead of putting the building blocks together by hand on location, key elements – like walls, floors, or even entire rooms – are precision-built in a factory setting, then delivered and simply assembled on site. This method not only speeds up the build process but also provides guaranteed quality and fewer on-site surprises.

Whether you're drawn to the efficiency of flatpack kits, the sleek precision of modular pods or want to realise a bespoke design with confidence, there's a solution to suit almost every budget and architectural vision. For self builders especially, the appeal is clear: faster timelines, fewer weather delays and the certainty that your home has been crafted with care in a controlled environment.

What is an offsite-manufactured home?

As the name suggests, this build route involves creating large parts of your home in a quality-controlled factory before assembling them on site. With panelised systems, sections of walling and roofing are typically pre-fitted with insulation – and potentially battens, plasterboard, windows and even external cladding already in place. This type of construction is generally designed, manufactured and installed by your supplier – at which point some may be able to take the rest of the project forward for you, or you can bring in your own contractors or trades.

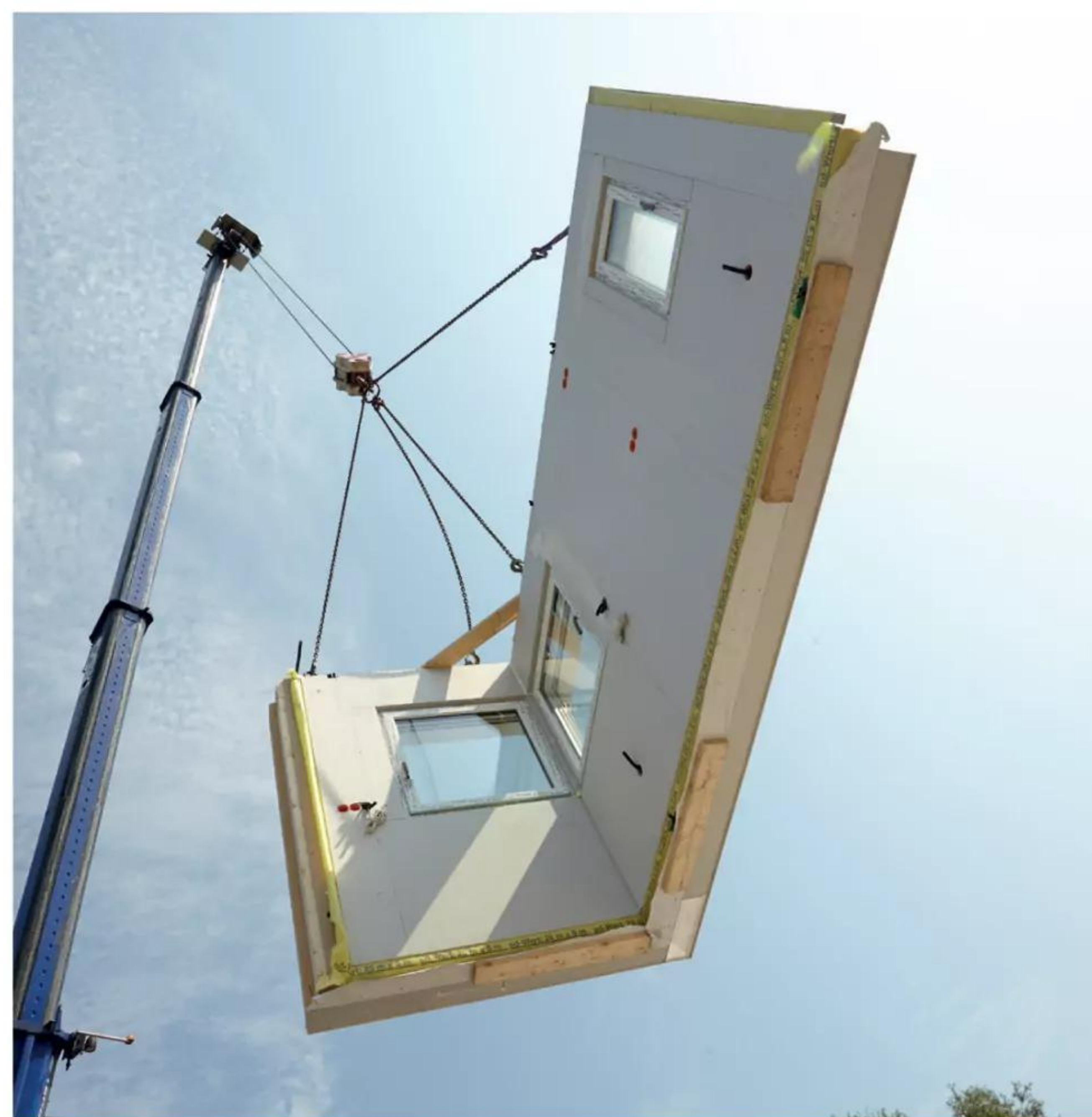
At the top end of the prefabrication scale is modular construction. With this method, entire three-dimensional rooms – sometimes complete with internal fixtures, flooring and services – are built offsite, put onto the back of a lorry and craned into place on your plot.

One of the major advantages of offsite construction is the significantly reduced build times it offers. "Depending on the size and complexity of the home, for our projects, assembly typically takes between one to three weeks, followed by an additional four to six months to complete internal finishes and services," says Ann-Kathrin Horter from Huf Haus. There are even some suppliers, like Dan-Wood, who specialise in delivering high-quality prefab houses in as little as three months on site.

This streamlined process is made possible using specialist machinery, where each component is cut and assembled with high precision. "Factory manufacturing results in a consistently higher quality product compared to traditional site-based construction, where you are often subject to weather disruptions and last-minute problem-solving," says Oliver Rehm, CEO at Baufriz. This greater control over quality and scheduling helps reduce delays, minimise waste and improve the overall build consistency.

Design choices

When you hear terms like offsite or prefabricated homes, you might initially picture something boxy and basic – but nothing could be further from the truth. "You have great flexibility with a prefab route," says Sonja Underwood, marketing director at the Structural Timber Association. "You can customise the cladding, roofing, flooring, fixtures and either adapt a design from the supplier's pattern book or create a completely bespoke home."



Most suppliers have an in-house design team with the expertise to bring your vision to life. They understand the manufacturing and construction processes in detail and, crucially, can advise on costs at every stage. That said, you're not limited to using their team to create your dream home. "Sometimes, clients prefer to work with their own architect who they have developed a relationship with, which is perfectly fine, too," says Oliver. In such cases, the supplier will collaborate with your designer to translate your plans into a reality using their building system.

As you begin the design process, it helps to reflect on how you want to live in your home. "It's a good idea to think about certain lifestyle questions: how does the family relax and unwind? Which spaces are communal, and which are meant to provide solace? What living ideals do you envision for your new home?" says Ann-Kathrin. With a clear sense of how you want your home to feel and function, your supplier's design team will be better equipped to turn that vision into a reality.

Costings

When it comes to the cost of a prefab project, it follows the usual pattern. A more highly customised design that deviates from the supplier's standard plan, combined with a larger floorplan, will result in a more expensive build.

Baufritz delivers most of its projects on a turnkey basis – taking you from design to completion. "The price an individually designed house with us usually starts from £2,800/m²," says Oliver. It's essential to discuss your finances early with your supplier's design team so they can tailor the plans to help you achieve your dream home within your desired budget. Many suppliers will provide a time-limited, guaranteed quote for their part of the works – with clarity on what's included in and what's not, providing a solid baseline for your budget planning.

Once you've agreed on a price and timeline, you can be confident that the offsite home package will be delivered on schedule and to the agreed-upon cost. The added benefit of a fixed-rate agreement means you won't be impacted by fluctuations in building material or labour costs, giving you greater financial security.

Eco credentials

Offsite homes are generally built with timber, which offers low embodied energy compared to concrete blockwork. Some manufacturers tightly control their supply chain to minimise their carbon footprints, and many can offer natural, healthy materials and finishes. Factory-based construction methods also help to minimise waste and improve efficiency. "Not only does in-house production guarantee that each supplier is adhering to stringent sustainability standards, it also reduces CO₂ emissions by shortening supply chains," explains Ann-Kathrin.

In addition to this, many offsite-manufactured homes are so well-insulated and airtight that they have a very small energy demand in use, which can be efficiently met with renewable technologies. "Most houses we create have air source or ground source heat pumps included. We can also offer mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) to boost a self build's energy efficiency and comfort levels," says Nick Blunt, director at Urbancurve Architecture and designer at WeberHaus.

EXPERT FAQ



Nick Blunt, director of Urbancurve Architecture and designer at WeberHaus, answers six common questions relating to offsite-manufactured homes

Can prefab homes reach Passivhaus standards?

Absolutely. The factory conditions allow for greater quality control of insulation and airtightness, which are key elements for certification. If you are looking to create a Passivhaus, I would recommend making your designer aware of this goal at the design stage, so these aims can be factored in.

Can I reclaim VAT on my prefab home project?

With the exception of certain items such as carpets and fitted furniture, new build dwellings are exempt from VAT – and there's no exception for offsite homes.

Do my mortgage options differ with a prefab home?

There is a growing number of mortgage providers who can assist with securing borrowing on offsite-manufactured self build projects. Speak to your supplier, as they'll have had plenty of experience with mortgage providers and will therefore be able to give you some recommendations.

Who handles the preliminary site works?

Typically a third party, although many manufacturers can recommend a firm near you. WeberHaus works with a number of UK partners to prepare the site, carry out foundations and complete below ground drainage works before the delivery and erection of the timber frame. Our team carries out checks of these works prior to the delivery of the frame to ensure everything meets our standards.

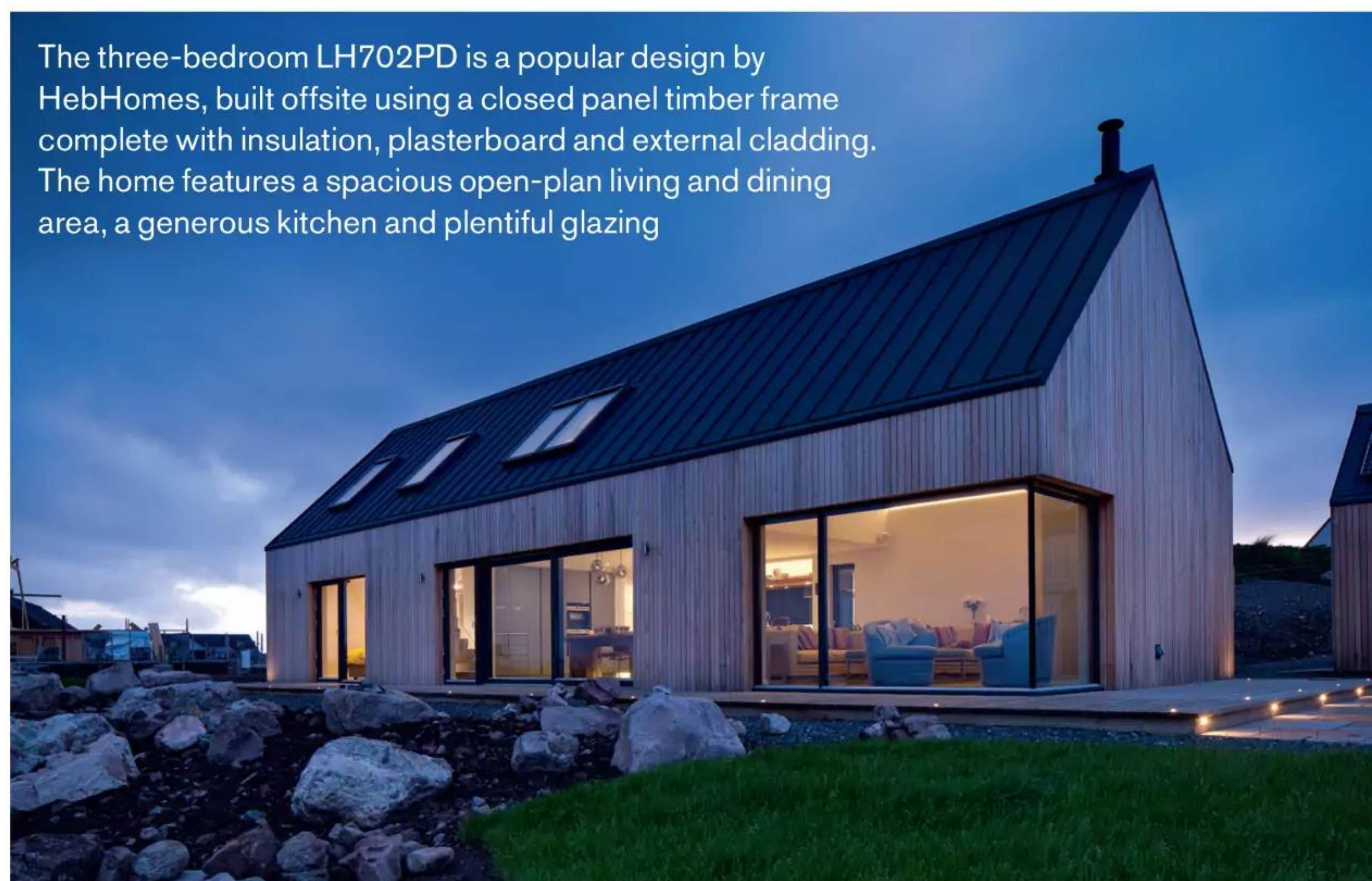
Can I change the house's design once manufacture is underway?

Ideally not, but some small changes may be possible in certain circumstances. We aim to work closely with clients to design all parts of the houses prior to manufacture so that future changes, delays and additional costs are avoided.

Who handles the final sign-off stages?

We closely work with building control authorities and warranty providers, who carry out inspections as the build progresses. We also have project managers who attend site to ensure the build is being constructed accurately and safely.

The three-bedroom LH702PD is a popular design by HebHomes, built offsite using a closed panel timber frame complete with insulation, plasterboard and external cladding. The home features a spacious open-plan living and dining area, a generous kitchen and plentiful glazing.

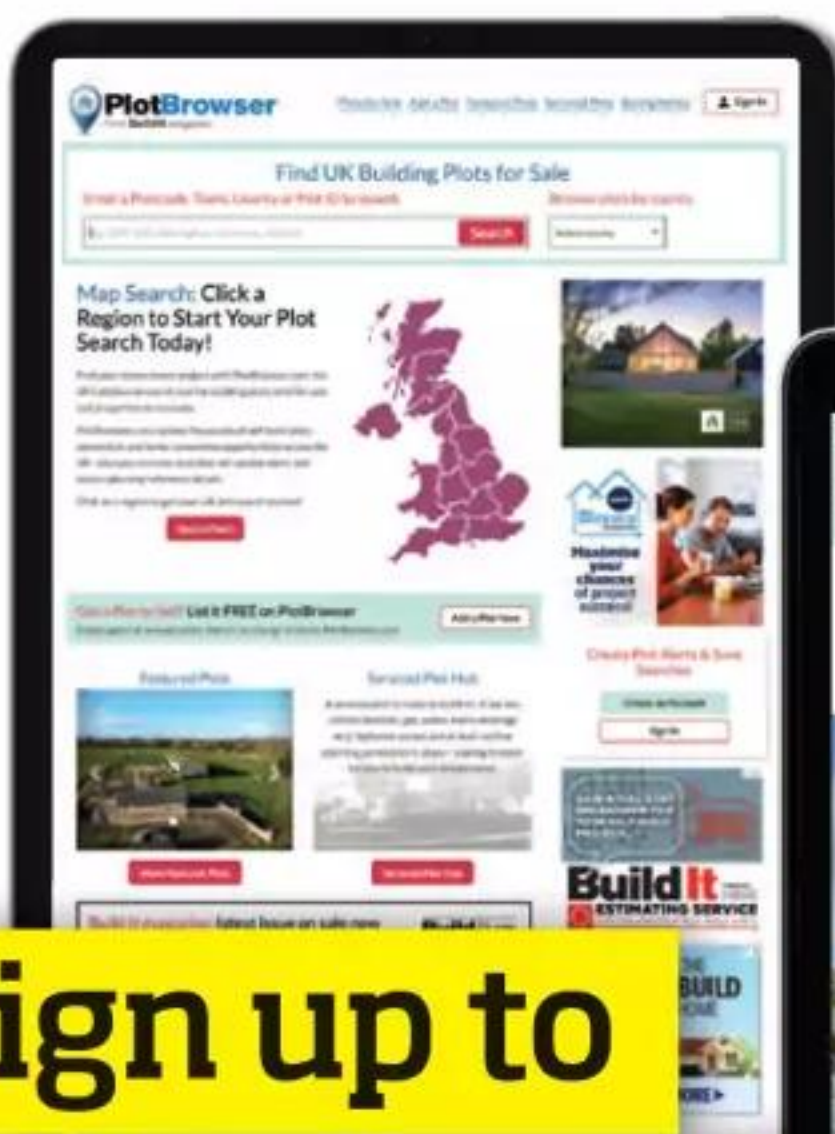


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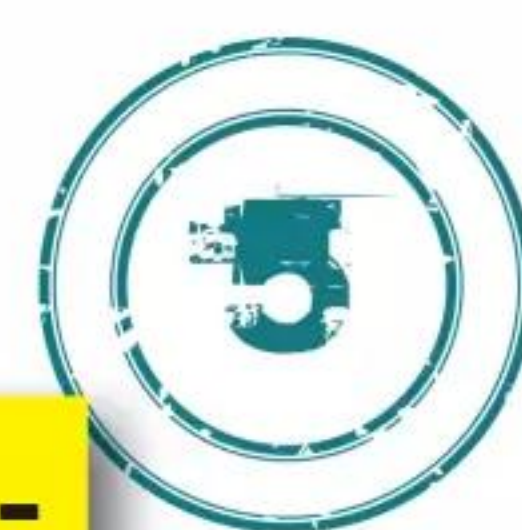
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Choosing a stove

Take a look at our handpicked selection of chic designs that will bring style and warmth to your home, plus gain expert insight into some common questions

When it comes to adding character to a home, few features are as inviting as a stove. Whether you're renovating a cosy cottage or updating a contemporary living space, stoves offer both practical heat and stunning visual appeal. From the traditional charm of a crackling wood fire to the convenience of electric heat, these appliances continue to be favoured choices for homeowners who are looking to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

As you start exploring the different stove choices on the market, consider the room size, how often you will be likely to use it and whether you want the crackle of real logs or the controllability of gas, pellets or electric. Remember that ventilation, safety and local building codes all come into play too. A stove can be more than a heat source – it's a centrepiece, so make sure it fits your home's style, your routine and your comfort needs.

For installation, each type has different requirements. Woodburning, multifuel and gas stoves need proper ventilation, a fireproof base and professional setup, while electric stoves are quicker to install as they typically only need a power socket (though a dedicated circuit may be required for more powerful models). Trustworthy brands will provide clear installation instructions, warranty coverage, and good customer support. Focus on quality construction, strong energy efficiency ratings and a solid reputation to ensure your stove performs safely and reliably over time.

Stoves can be an eco-friendly home heating option, depending on the type and how they're used. Modern woodburning stoves are far more efficient than older models, producing less smoke and offering a low-carbon solution when using responsibly sourced, properly dried fuel. Choosing energy-efficient models, burning clean fuels and following proper maintenance routines all contribute to a stove's overall sustainability and eco credentials.

Schiedel's MCZ pellet stove delivers up to 8kW of heat. The modern unit effortlessly transforms your space into a warm and inviting retreat. The system can also be completely controlled through your smart phone and has an inbuilt self-cleaning option for greater practicality



Jotul's F370V2 Advance combines sleek design with innovative features like magnetic door locking and soft-close seals. With an output of 6.0kW it can heat spaces up to 100m², making it ideal for modern, open-plan interiors



The Classic 8 Eco multifuel stove from Percy Doughty is available in black or white. It offers a heat output of 5kW and has an impressive A+ energy rating. The heritage-style design suits both modern and classic homes, and an extensive window gives you a clear view of the warm, flickering flames



Combining contemporary design with practical functionality, the multifuel Vogue Medium V with Highline base from Stovax features an integrated log storage area for added convenience. Delivering a powerful heat output of up to 8.2kW, this Ecodesign-ready, DEFRA-exempt freestanding stove offers exceptional flame visuals that create a captivating focal point in any living space



This striking elliptical 7.9kW woodburning stove from Dru Fire is available as a freestanding, fixed or suspended version to best suit your interiors. For added impact, you can also opt for a see-through tunnel to create a dramatic focal point. A direct air supply means it can be installed in almost any location within your home

With a 5kW output and up to 82.1% efficient, this beautiful woodburning stove from Charlton & Jenrick is great for creating a luxurious, cosy atmosphere.

It comes with a corrosion-resistant steel ash pan and firebrick refractory liners to ensure longevity. It is SIA Ecodesign 2022 certified and DEFRA exempt for burning wood in smokeless zones, and has a clearSkies Level 4 certification



Create a wow-factor statement in your home with Eurostove's Ilekto electric stove. Designed for properties without a flue, it offers effortless installation and a clean, contemporary aesthetic. Available in a range of sizes, the Ilekto can be tailored to your preferences with a choice of log styles, flame colours and the addition of a realistic crackle sound to enhance the ambience

CONTACTS

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EXPERT FAQs



Peter Mintoft, managing director at Charlton & Jenrick, answers your questions about installing and maintaining solid fuel stoves

Q What maintenance does a stove require?

A For solid fuel stoves, you will have to clear the ash from the firebox and lift the baffle weekly to remove any debris from the flue – perhaps more frequently if you are using coal-based fuels. New chimneys and flues will need to be swept annually. If you have replaced an open fire, ideally you would do this twice in the first month after installation and then yearly. If you are burning damp wood or smoky fuels, you will need to have the chimney swept more often.

It is best to get a yearly service by a certified engineer to inspect the seals, joints, chimney integrity and the baffle. Only burn recommended fuels (seasoned wood, smokeless briquettes etc) as house coals, petroleum cokes, rubbish, oils or unapproved fuels can cause significant damage and void your warranty.

Q What ventilation is required for solid fuel stoves?

A For solid-fuel stoves with a rated output above 5kW, the minimum ventilation requirement in new build homes is 5.5cm² of vent per kW above 5kW, via a permanent external vent. For example, an 8kW stove would need 16.5cm² (3kW above 5kW, multiplied by 5.5cm²/kW). Even below 5kW, ventilation is recommended if you experience difficulties lighting fires or see fumes. Outside air kits are ideal for airtight self builds, as they source combustion air directly. Extractor fans should be avoided in the same room as the stove.

Q Who should install my stove – can I do the job myself?

A It is best to use an OFTEC or HETAS certified installer for wood and solid fuel options. This way you ensure compliance, safety and make sure your warranty is intact. DIY is possible, but only if you strictly follow the manufacturers instructions and Building Regs, as you will still need to make sure you obtain safety certification and have the correct CO detectors.

Q What are the rules surrounding flues & chimneys for stoves?

A The minimum chimney height for a stove is 4.5m (3m for gas fires) with a diameter of 125-200mm. Generally, a taller chimney is almost always better.

Existing chimneys will need a flexible stainless steel lining of around 150mm for smokeless/seasoned wood. A rigid flue pipe (minimum 125mm diameter) must be installed from the stove to the chimney. The connection to the chimney and any joins within the flue pipe system must be properly sealed to prevent smoke and gas leaks.

The flue draught (which draws smoke and gases up the chimney to be expelled) should ideally be between 12-25 Pa (1.2-2.5 mm water gauge) at the collar. If the draught is too strong, a damper or draught stabiliser should be installed to regulate the airflow and prevent over-firing. Additionally, each stove that you install in your home must have its own dedicated flue.

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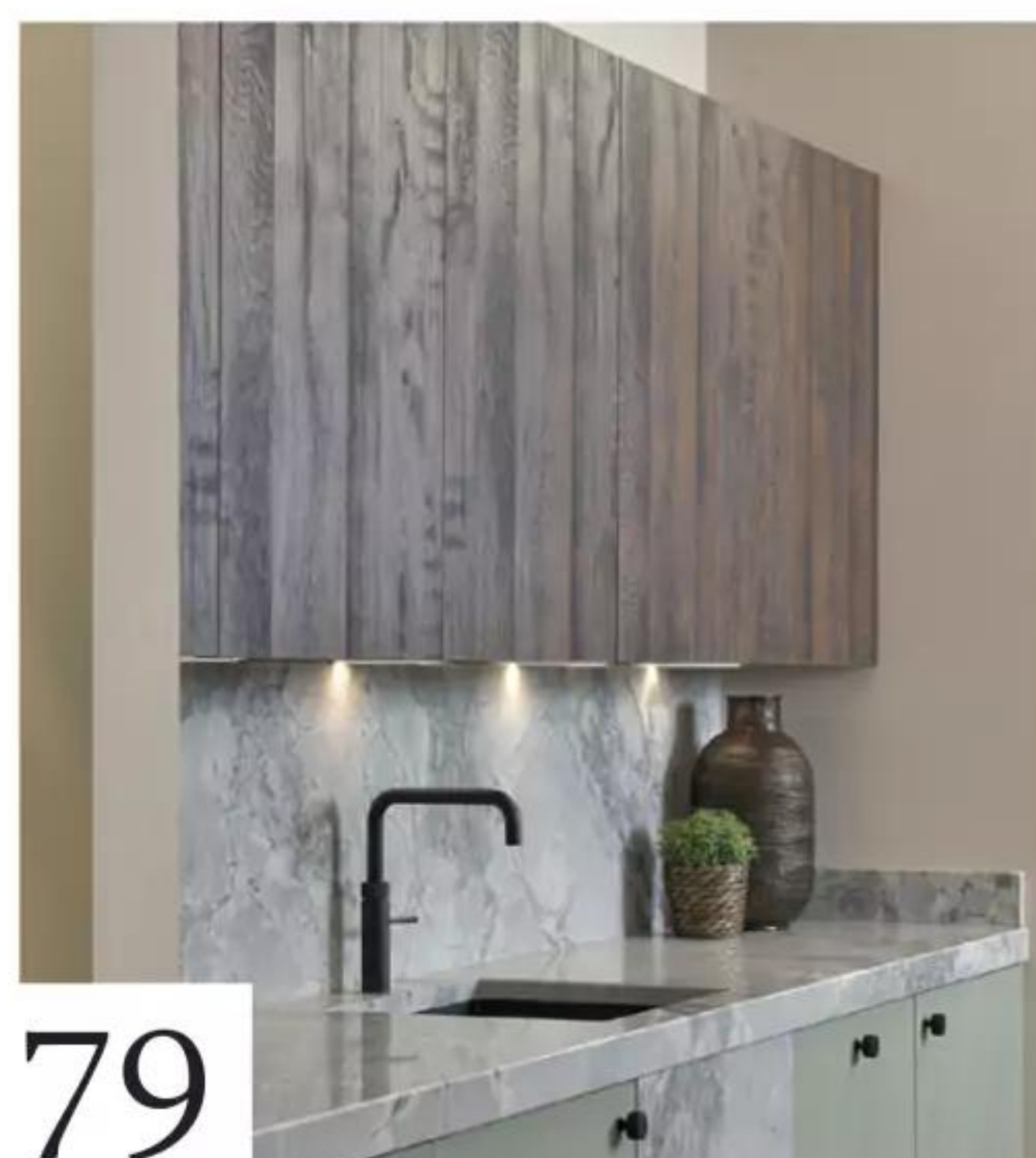
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KITCHEN SPECIAL



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From developing the ideal design and perfecting your layout, to specifying the best fit-out features and appliances, discover how to create your dream kitchen setup with our round up of advice and inspiration



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Explore some stylish units to add wow factor and functionality to your kitchen



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PLANNING YOUR KITCHEN

From pin-pointing your favourite cabinet style and must-have appliances through to understanding how the ideal layout could streamline how you use this space day-to-day, **Emily Batesmith** looks at what to consider when designing your perfect new kitchen

Above: This Georgian home in South East London now features a stunning new culinary space from DeVol using its Classic English Kitchen cabinets. The total cost of the cupboards for this design was £67,420 (devolkitchens.co.uk)

Your kitchen is likely to be a central hub of activity throughout the day – the heart of the home, as it's often referred to. So, whether you're building a new property from scratch or renovating an existing space, the chance to create a kitchen that's perfectly suited to your household is an exciting opportunity that you'll want to get right first time. But with various styles, layouts and high-tech gadgets to choose from, where should you start when creating your dream kitchen?

Working out what you want

Write down a wishlist of what your perfect kitchen includes. What styles do you like? Are there any must-haves – ie walk-in pantry, island, Aga? What do you like and dislike about your current kitchen? Gather pictures of things you like for inspiration, but keep in mind that the space you're working to will be different. The most important consideration is your lifestyle and the way you interact with your kitchen. Take note of how you use

it day-to-day and what upgrades could enhance that or perhaps make things easier. For instance, that might be better functionality for entertaining, more ultra-efficient storage or a separate utility/laundry room/walk-in pantry to organise (or hide away) clutter.

Remember that the architecture of your building will feed into the style of cabinets that will suit your home – you're unlikely to want a highly traditional kitchen in an ultra-modern property. Contemporary units might have sleek, reflective surfaces and fuss-free finishes, while a traditional look could include Shaker doors or a country farmhouse rustic feel. "It is important when investing in your home that trends do not lead your decision," says Scott Rotchell, sales director at Poggenpohl UK. "Instead, consider what will last, what won't date, what you will love for years to come." Read on to page 79 for inspiration on different kitchen styles.

Your kitchen within the wider floorplan

The space you have available will of course be crucial to working out the design and what layout makes sense. Open-plan kitchen-dining-living areas remain popular. Setting your kitchen within a wider living zone that's in frequent use makes for a social space that has many practical benefits – for instance, keeping an eye on little ones or chatting to guests while preparing food.

However, since 2020 (when we all unexpectedly had to spend a lot more time at home) there has been a revival of more closed off layouts. "Since the pandemic, we've noticed a growing shift towards broken-plan layouts," says Natalie Fry from Grid Thirteen Design

Studio. “Families want to cook, work, relax and socialise all in the same space – but in clearly defined zones. Design features such as double-sided fireplaces, open bookshelves, glazed screens, Crittall-style doors, wine walls, sliding pocket doors or even subtle changes in floor level help to create functional distinctions while maintaining natural light and achieving a cohesive aesthetic throughout the space.” Read more about open vs broken plan in the box-out (below).

If space is limited, with clever planning you can still achieve a great amount of storage and worktop area. “In smaller floorplans, height is the most important factor to consider – taller wall cabinets can be accessed by plinth steps that are tucked neatly away but are easily accessible for reaching,” says Scott.

Getting the perfect layout

Navigating the perfect arrangement of worktops, cabinets, islands and appliances could feel like a minefield – especially if you’re starting with a blank canvas. “Break your kitchen into zones dedicated to specific tasks,” says Selena Quick from PAD Bespoke Kitchens. “We often use a five-zone method, but while the number of zones for the ‘best-designed kitchen’ is up for debate, we think six zones is ideal if there is space to do so.” The team defines these as:

- 1 Storage for food**
- 2 Storage for crockery**

OPEN VS BROKEN PLAN KITCHENS

NATALIE FRY, founder and creative director at **Grid Thirteen Design Studio**, discusses the pros and cons of these floorplan arrangements

There are three main options when it comes to integrating your kitchen within your home's floorplan:

Open-plan has long been popular with homeowners, featuring kitchen, dining and entertaining spaces all within one large, undivided area. By removing walls and barriers entirely, this layout encourages social interaction among family members and creates a spacious, connected feel throughout the home.

Closed-plan kitchens are completely separated from other living areas by full walls and doors. This traditional layout appeals to some homeowners for its enhanced privacy, better containment of noise and smells, and provides a more formal separation between the kitchen and adjoining living spaces.

Broken-plan layouts offer a balanced solution between open and closed-plan approaches. This approach retains much of the spaciousness and light of open-plan living while using personalised zoning to define cooking, dining and relaxing areas.

A kitchen designer will want to understand your individual needs, lifestyle and design preferences to identify which style is best for you. Think about how you and your family want to use the space day to day. Working with a specialist kitchen designer will help develop layout choices to ensure every zone is functional, practical, and versatile, without compromising on aesthetics.



- 3 A dedicated prep space**
- 4 A central cooking zone**
- 5 A relaxing area**
- 6 A place to store cleaning items**

“These are a great starting point for kitchen design, but they’re not strict – they’ll often overlap or weave into each other depending on the layout of your space.”

In terms of the arrangement of worktops, think about L, U, and G-shaped configurations. Kitchen islands make a beautiful central focal piece, but really consider whether it’s the best option for the room – particularly if you’re working in a compact floorplan that might be better suited to an open, more versatile space. Read more about kitchen islands on page 88.

“Get the functionality and layout of your kitchen right before you start thinking about colours and worktops,” says Selena. “With this approach you’ll have far less need to change the fundamentals of your kitchen later

Top: Designed by PAD Bespoke Kitchens using Chester cabinetry from PAD’s London’s Belgravia Collection. PAD Kitchens start from £20,000 (pad.london)

Above: The Puustelli Miinus system available at Sustique is a bio-composite kitchen that delivers a more sustainable, modular alternative to conventional materials (sustique.co.uk)

Right: The specialist kitchen designers at Poggenpohl can work alongside interior designers or architects to create a bespoke space that works for the whole family (poggenpohl.com)

Below right: This renovated cottage in Yorkshire has a new bespoke kitchen created by Grid Thirteen using the company's Darling Maeve handcrafted cabinetry. Kitchens in this range start from £50,000 (gridthirteen.co.uk)



on, giving you the option to update the aesthetics without having to spend a fortune.”

Who can help with your kitchen design?

Some self builders end up cutting back on kitchen budget as installation tends to happen at the later stages of a project, when funds have already been swallowed up elsewhere. However, early planning, especially with a specialist kitchen designer on board, in the early planning phase of your home will ensure correct cash allocation and a cohesive look with the rest of the property.

THE KITCHEN WORKING TRIANGLE

SELENA QUICK, founder and director of PAD Bespoke Kitchens, discusses whether this design solution is still the best option

What is the kitchen working triangle?

It is a kitchen concept that was developed in the 1940s. The ‘working triangle’ method provided a rule of thumb: an efficient cooking space is formed by placing the fridge, oven and sink in a triangle formation. The result? Reduced steps between kitchen appliances and enhanced efficiency. This method all comes down to splitting your home's kitchen into areas of specific functionality.

Is it still the best solution?

Today's kitchens – and how we want to live, cook, and socialise in them – are far more complex than in the 1940s. The added sophistication and range of appliances on the market have also grown, and in many design schemes, kitchens have outgrown the triangle method. However, the importance of plotting out your kitchen areas, depending on how you use them, before jumping into aesthetics, has never changed.

What are the alternatives?

The simple triangle has largely been replaced by what we call ‘zoning’. While the ideal number of zones is up for debate, at PAD we use a five-zone method – or six if there's space. It's important to figure out how to get the most out of the space, what you'll use it for, your priorities, wishlist items and how certain layouts or appliances can make your life easier. For example, if you're a keen cook, we might prioritise a larger hob and prep space compared to someone who prefers quick and easy meals.

Visit both national and independent showrooms and get concept drawings from different suppliers. The big retailers offer online kitchen design tools, but working with a bespoke specialist will ensure things are tailored exactly to your needs. “We always take into account our clients' budgets and try to give them a perfect room however much they have to spend,” says Helen Parker, creative director at DeVol. “We imagine each kitchen as our own and consider how we'd want to use it; we sometimes even suggest structural changes if it's going to make a real difference.”

When it comes to finding the right company, it's worth shopping around and asking your friends and project contacts for recommendations. “Builders, architects and interior designers will often have kitchen contacts they have worked with before and have built relationships with – the vast majority of the projects we do are either a recommendation or repeat business,” says Scott.





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KITCHEN STYLES

The look of your kitchen cabinets will heavily influence the feel of the whole zone. **Lindsay Blair** investigates the main design options for your new space



CLASSIC SHAKER

This ever-popular style originates from the simple, utilitarian designs of the Shaker community, who became known for their handcrafted furniture. These kitchens provide a timeless door design that can be easily adapted through the choice of colour and detailing in many property types. While veneer and laminate options are available at a more affordable price point, solid wood Shaker units made by hand are in keeping with original manufacturing techniques but will come at a higher cost. These can be painted and further repainted should you wish to introduce a new colour in the future.

◀ The Shaker kitchen by Kate Feather has no decorative beading or cornice to keep a simple look (katefeather.com)

MODERN HANDLELESS

Often deemed the ultimate blank canvas, a handleless kitchen is a minimal but highly sophisticated design that sits well alongside striking, modern architecture and within large, open-plan spaces. While typically totally flat-fronted, the latest door designs also encompass elements of Shaker and traditional styling that can sit atop integrated opening mechanisms such as push-to-open, knock-to-open, recessed finger pulls or sliding options, so that no handles are required.

▶ H Line Sutton Scot Grey with Madoc Portland Oak and Onyx handle rail (masterclasskitchens.co.uk)



SLAB DOOR DESIGNS

A slab door has a completely flat surface, without any raised or recessed features. It creates a simple look that can be personalised through handle choice. Available in a range of materials, colours, matt and gloss finishes, slab doors are often formed of an MDF core with veneer or laminate facing, making them a cost-effective option. With a pared-back look, a slab kitchen can form a base for more adventurous features, whether architectural or as part of the kitchen, such as statement worktops. You may prefer to lean into a monotone approach and keep surfaces in the same colour and material, for example, laminate-fronted units and worktops.

◀ Duxbury kitchen in limestone from Magnet (magnet.co.uk)





WOODEN KITCHENS

While pine and mahogany were once the style of choice, oak and walnut are now the go-to, with the texture and natural grain of the wood providing the main design focus. Timber adds warmth to a space and will develop a natural patina as it reacts to light and humidity over time, adding to its character. When deciding on the type of wood, consider brightness levels and the size of the room. Large and light spaces can be the ideal setting for darker timbers such as walnut and iroko where the light highlights the grain detail, while paler tones will work when you're going for an airy feel.

▲ The Mid Century Kitchen designed by H Miller Bros (hmillerbros.co.uk)



TRANSITIONAL DESIGNS

Mixing and matching different kitchen door styles and colours is a popular way to personalise a space and works in kitchens of all sizes. Matt and gloss doors pair well or a combination of handleless wall units with slab handled doors at the base for added practicality. It may also be that larger units, such as a breakfast cupboard or integrated fridge freezer, have handles while the remaining units are sleek. Other features such as handle choice and worktops can add to a transitional feel. For example, contemporary knurled bar handles on a Shaker door; adding chunky worktops and modern waterfall edge; or choosing a contemporary colour or material for more traditional in-frame doors.

▲ Recycled Renzo handleless cabinetry in Oak Tobacco and slab Mayfair doors in super matt Sage Green provide an attractive mix of styles (daval-furniture.co.uk)



TRADITIONAL STYLE

Better suited to period properties and those with grand proportions, traditional doors with heavy detailing are often paired with ogee-edge granite or marble worktops, wooden plate racks, Butler sinks and mantles, particularly where a chimney breast is utilised as a cooking zone with a range cooker. Curved cabinets, for example a rounded island end, alongside wall panelling and fluted glazed panels are seeing a resurgence both in traditional schemes and those with simpler Shaker doors. It's worth noting that the more intricate the features, the higher the cost.

▲ Artisan Kitchen from John Lewis of Hungerford (john-lewis.com)

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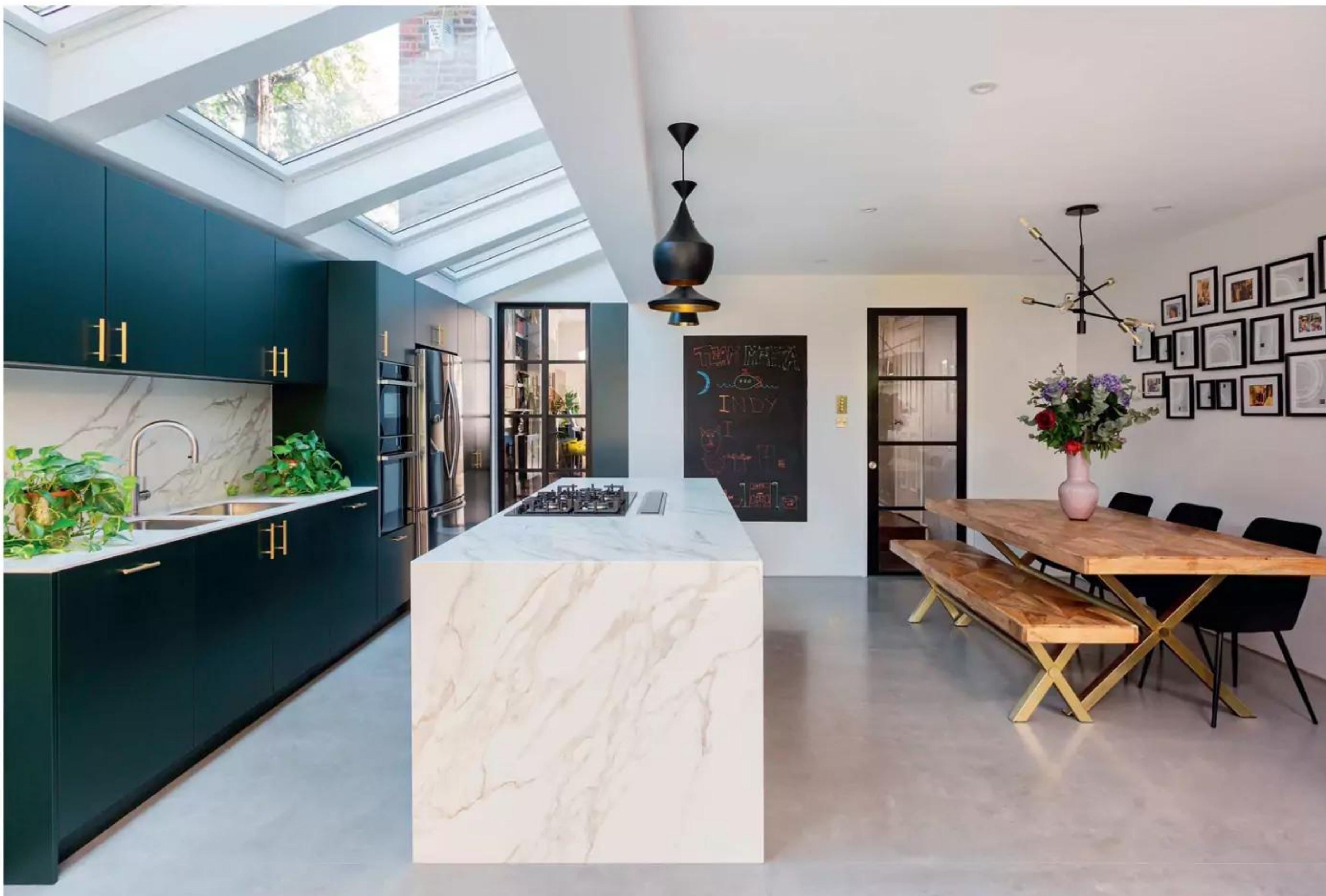
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ECO KITCHENS

Build It's eco expert **Nigel Griffiths** looks at how to plan and realise a more sustainable kitchen for your home

Above: To reduce reliance on artificial illumination, a series of Velux rooflights bring natural daylight into the task zones of this stylish Hux kitchen, which is part of a side-return extension by Zulufish (zulufish.co.uk)

Kitchens are probably the most resource-intensive room in the house to kit-out and use. They're also the spaces we update and change most often, in part due to wear and tear. So, to reduce environmental impact, it's important to get them right first time and give them as long a life as possible.

Eco materials

The most significant environmental impact of a kitchen comes from the materials we use to construct and furnish it. Here's some alternative spec solutions:

Kitchen cabinets are conventionally made from chipboard, which is high in formaldehyde (a recognised carcinogen). They're then coated in plastics, making a composite material that's impossible to recycle. Carcassing can be built using FSC-certified plywood, which is much lower in formaldehyde and easily recyclable. It's also more durable and resistant to water than chipboard or MDF.

Worktops are another example of an item where composite materials are commonly used. Instead of melamine chipboard, consider natural stone or solid wood for worktops. Much stone is imported, of course, however, it will last much longer. Solid timber will need to be sustainably sourced, but as a worktop it has a warmth and beauty that's hard to beat.

Flooring is a big-ticket item in kitchens. Many self-builders and extenders will opt for stone or tiled floors, with underfloor heating and insulation built in from the start. You could use cork or renewable solid timber, such as bamboo. Laminates based on ply rather than MDF are an option, too. Don't overlook natural linoleum – it's made

from linseed oil, unlike most modern versions, which are plastic-based and derived from fossil fuels. If you're fitting wall or floor tiles, you may prefer to use adhesives that are non-toxic and solvent-free.

Freestanding furniture is worth considering. Forget the conventional built-in kitchen units and invest in individual pieces – a dresser with drawers for cutlery, wall-hung cabinets for glassware, a larder cupboard, open-fronted storage for pots and pans, topped with solid beech work surfaces, and of course tables and islands. Kitchens built like this never wear out – individual items get replaced from time-to-time; but all-in-all, it's a much more sustainable approach.

Go second-hand. Buying a used kitchen (whether pre-installed or ex-display) can be a great way to save money – especially if you can pick up a pre-loved designer range at a bargain price. With this route, you're reusing materials and reducing environmental impact. Inevitably, some adjustments will be needed and additions made – plus you'll

probably still want to buy new flooring, appliances etc.

Upgrading existing kitchens

If you already have a fitted kitchen, you can sometimes upgrade it cost-effectively and give it a completely new look and feel without spending (or costing) the earth. In many cases, the carcassing for the wall and floor cabinets can be retained, with new doors and countertops fitted.

Always budget to redo the tiles with this approach – replacing worktops often disturbs them. This gives you the opportunity to make alterations to power outlets and task lighting (or to add accent lighting), as well as updating a strong visual element of the kitchen.

Indoor air quality

When it comes to considering sustainability, many people's first thoughts are about energy use – but I'd suggest we ought to begin with human health. Food hygiene is, of course, essential. Yet we also need to consider air pollution in kitchens.

When gas is burned it gives off CO₂ and water, both of which adversely impact air quality. Steam leads to condensation, which can result in mould growth, while high CO₂ levels can cause various kinds of health problems. Electric hobs don't cause the same air pollution as gas hobs, plus they're easier and quicker to clean.

The answer to both of these issues is ventilation, and plenty of it. Purge ventilation can be achieved simply by opening the windows, but extract ventilation is also required. This should be controlled by humidity and CO₂ sensors, with a manual override to boost extraction when needed.

WATER EFFICIENCY IN THE KITCHEN

It is thought that dishwashers use less water than washing by hand. Plus, the most efficient modern dishwashers use less than half the water that older models do. But if you are hand washing, then the thing that can really make a difference is rinsing. Some people leave the tap running throughout the process, and at – say – six litres per minute, this racks up quickly. Plus, if you use hot water for rinsing, the cost can become quite significant.

We rinse recyclable packaging before putting them into the bins. Depending on how you do this, it could add significantly to water use. If you simply pop them in the bowl after dealing with any other hand-washed items, then water use might be minimal. But running a tap for a long period just to get the last few traces of bean juice from the tin is likely to be a waste of time, water and money.

Energy efficiency

We tend to focus on finding the best-rated low-energy appliances when thinking about kitting out a kitchen. But the way we use our white goods is just as important, and can have a very significant overall impact:

- **Pots boil** much more quickly on the hob if they've got lids placed on top.
- **Fridge doors** frequently get left open longer than needed, which uses more energy.
- **Defrosting items** in the fridge (if done well ahead of time) can help it run more efficiently.
- **You can also save energy** when defrosting by using the room's ambient temperature or putting smaller items in a pan of warm water, rather than using the microwave.
- **If you're using the oven**, could it cook (or heat) more than one thing?
- **Fill the kettle** with just a little more than the water you need (and of course above the minimum line), rather than all the way up. After pouring the water out, refill with at least a cupful so that the heat dissipates to the liquid rather than to the room. This means if you boil it again soon, you'll be starting with warmer water.

Energy can be saved by careful selection of appliances. Induction hobs are more efficient than ceramic versions, for instance, while it stands to reason that a one-cup kettle will use less energy to boil a single mugful of water than a kettle that can cater for seven cups. The latest dishwashers use less energy than older models, and a microwave will cook a baked potato more quickly and efficiently than you can manage by putting it in the oven, albeit the skin won't be as crispy.

More recently, boiling water taps have been gaining popularity. It is true that these taps use significantly less energy to boil small amounts of water than a kettle. Some versions offer the convenience of boiling, hot, cold and filtered water all from a single tap.

Lighting is another important area to consider in your eco kitchen. Well-directed task lighting may be more efficient than high-output centralised fittings, but the best light of all is daylight. If you are building new or carrying out extensive renovations, do what you can to maximise natural brightness in the kitchen, such as by introducing rooflights where possible.



Above: Qettle Original is a 4-in-1 tap that dispenses boiling water, filtered drinking water, plus normal hot and cold to save energy versus a standard kettle (qettle.com)

Left: The Panorama Pro 90 by Novy is a powerful four-zone induction hob with integrated down-draft extractor (novy.com)

NIGEL GRIFFITHS



Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and is the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.

KITCHEN FIT-OUT



Your kitchen is made up of many elements, all needing to work in harmony to create a practical working space that looks great, too. Here's how to navigate choosing the big ticket items that will play an important role in forming your perfect culinary zone

Above: Bifolding doors across the working section of your kitchen are a great solution when it comes to creating a clutter-free space (sustique.co.uk)

Right: Mix and match worktops to create texture in your kitchen. This design by Naked Kitchens features a pairing of timber and sleek quartz worktops. The use of different coloured cabinetry injects personality and flair (nakedkitchens.com)

WORKTOPS

The surfaces in your kitchen will be doing the hard work of hosting all the food prep, and a stained or damaged worktop could ruin the feel of the whole space. You need a material that's moisture and stain resistant, plus capable of withstanding higher temperatures (not that any worktop is recommended for scorching hot pans!).

Wood surfaces look timeless and elegant, but make sure you're specifying something that isn't at risk of staining and water damage around the sink. "It's all about how it's finished, protected and sealed. If you have an oiled surface, every time you wipe it over you take a bit of that away, so you have to reapply it every so often," says Jayne Everett, creative director at Naked Kitchens. "We use nano treatment that is incredibly tough and repels water – these timber worktops can even be used as a bath surround. Look for a high grade, well produced timber from a diligent manufacturer."

Quartz has a beautiful, polished look and attractive stone veining throughout, making for a stunning worktop



HIDDEN KITCHENS

In floorplans of the past, the kitchen was tucked away separate from the dining room. It was a space you could shut the door on and happily forget about any mess. These days, many people have their kitchens within an open plan living space, meaning there's nowhere to hide when it comes to messy surfaces, the hum of the fridge and worktop appliance clutter.

One solution is to have essentially two kitchens, one that remains sleek and tidy, and the other that is the engine room – a place to hide things you don't want guests (or even yourself) to see. It's a space to put functional appliances that don't fit in with your sleek design, such as toasters, microwaves, kettles and suchlike. It's somewhere you can shove cooking mess that you haven't had time to sort and dirty dishes while guests are still around to easily keep the entertaining space clear and clean. Of course, a separate utility can also play this role to a certain extent.

This kind of second kitchen is a nice option if you've got the space in your home – and budget – but an alternative is to include a large larder/pantry cupboard, sometimes referred to as an 'appliance garage' within your kitchen cabinetry. Those with bifold doors are great as they concertina back to display the essentials of a working kitchen, but can be easily closed off to hide the mess from sight.

option. Plus, it's durable and stain resistant. It's had some bad press due to the potential health risks of prolonged exposure to silica dust during manufacture; an issue that should be carefully managed in the factory with appropriate dust suppression and PPE. However, once sealed, this product is considered perfectly safe. Other stone options include marble and granite – both are sought-after, but require regular sealing and must be installed by someone who knows what they're doing.

Concrete surfaces will bring a modern, industrial feel to your kitchen. It's highly durable, scratch-resistant and can be stained in any colour, however, it's heavy. Stainless steel gives that professional chef look and is easy to keep clean – but any scratches will show.

Mixing and matching surfaces is a great way to bring variety, plus it has practical benefits. "Adding a built-in chopping board of end grain timber makes for a great prep area," says Jayne. "Breaking up your worktops adds personality and texture."

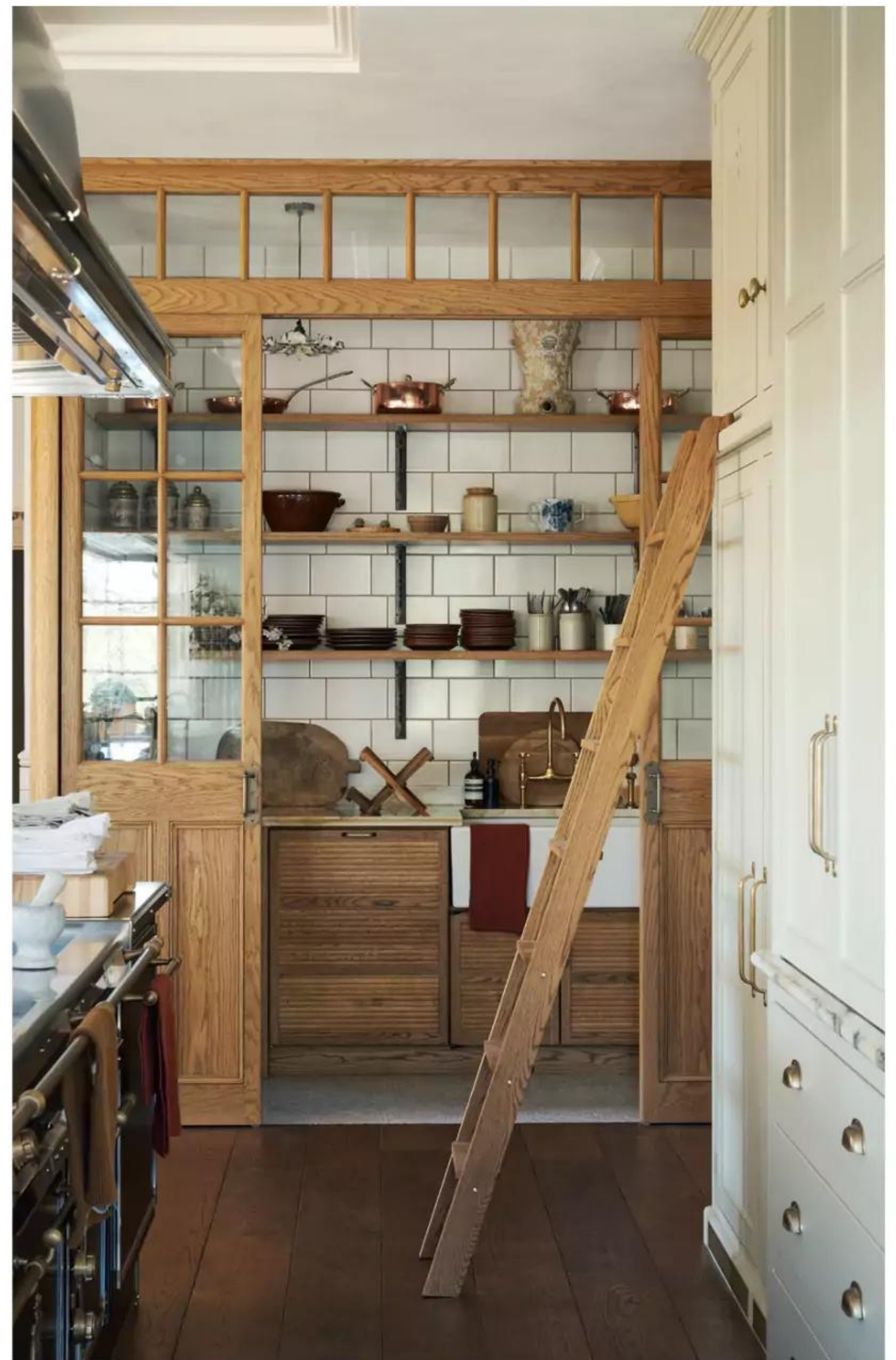
LIGHTING

Consider natural light when you're planning your kitchen – many projects have rooflights and large spans of glazed doors to create bright spaces. That being said, this is a working zone that you'll be using when it's dark outside, especially in the winter months, so carefully planned artificial illumination is important.

The trick is to layer different products rather than having a single type of lighting do it all. Under-cabinet lights will create a nice glow in the room when you're not preparing food, while spotlights will focus on areas where you need to see what you're doing. Pendant lights hanging over

a kitchen island are a popular look, often in a row of three. And directional downlights swivel to where you need them.

"Make sure you have plenty of inset ceiling lights to give full-on brightness when needed, but as with all lighting, get dimmers fitted – they make so much difference to atmosphere and function," says Helen



Above: A second kitchen that can be closed off from the kitchen entertaining space is a sought-after feature. This design by DeVol includes attractive partially glazed wooden doors (devolkitchens.co.uk)

Left: Pendant lights over a kitchen island remain a popular look. This design from PAD Bespoke Kitchens also features a striking herringbone floor (pad.london)





Above: In-built pantries with internal worktop space create an area for food preparation that you can quickly close off to create a clutter-free zone. This design by Naked Kitchens utilises storage in the cabinet doors for spices and jars

Right: Hot water taps mean you don't have to wait around to make a tea or get the steamer on. The Fusion and Classic Fusion models from Quooker come in a patinated brass (quooker.co.uk)

Parker, creative director at DeVol. "Wall lights are a great way of mixing up the feel of a room; they seem to create a softer light and really give character to a kitchen."

FLOORING

Your kitchen flooring is going to be in constant use and will experience spillages and food splatter. Plus, it needs to withstand the impact of the inevitable dropped glass or crockery. So, from a practical point it needs to be strong and durable. And aesthetically, it'll play a big role in the look of the space. Tiles and timber remain popular flooring choices for kitchens, especially when laid in a pattern that turns the surface into a focal feature.

Ceramic tiles are easy to clean and come in a wide variety of styles, so there's something to suit any decor. However, they are cold and hard underfoot, plus slippery when wet. Porcelain is more slip-resistant and denser than ceramic, meaning it's less likely to crack or chip. Marble and limestone are both elegant options, but have high porosity so need sealing and regular maintenance. Terracotta has a rustic charm and adds texture, but likewise, will need periodic sealing to enhance durability.

Timber flooring offers character and warmth, plus it's timeless appeal suits any style of kitchen. Herringbone and chevron oak have had a resurgence in recent years, but Scott Rotchell, sales director at Poggenpohl UK (poggenpohl.com), recommends thinking carefully when it comes to hardwood: "this isn't necessarily the most practical choice, and so it's important to consider whether the overall appearance is more important to you." Engineered timber is a durable and robust solution.

LVT is a great choice for high-traffic areas, plus it can provide the look of timber with less maintenance.

Polished concrete is fantastic in contemporary schemes and is very hardwearing, plus it's water resistant.

Most of the flooring types you'll be considering for a kitchen can work effectively with underfloor heating (a popular choice) – but outputs will need to be carefully designed to suit the floor build up, so do your research.

APPLIANCES

From cookers, hobs and extractor fans through to sinks and fridge-freezers, the appliances in your kitchen need to be efficient and make cooking food enjoyable. Plus, there are a whole hosts of options in terms of extra gadgets to consider – such as hot water taps, wine storage, pull-out integrated bins and so on.

A range cooker is a centrepiece and always looks stunning, but needs plenty of space. Positioning built-in ovens at arm-height means you don't need to keep bending down to check on food – plus this keeps the hot oven door out of reach of young children. Think about what power source you want – induction hobs have good energy efficiency, for instance, while gas hobs (which probably won't be acceptable in new build homes once the long-awaited Future Homes Standard comes into effect) provide instant control.

The right extractor fan will depend on your kitchen style and hob positioning. A sleek ceiling-mounted hood over an island will bring wow factor, while an integrated version blended into cabinetry is great if you don't want to make a feature out of it. Downdraft extractors that rise from the worktop are another subtle style, plus they're the go-to option if you've also got an MVHR (mechanical ventilation and heat recovery) system.

When it comes to fridge-freezers and dishwashers, decide between freestanding or built-in versions. Do your research on energy efficiency and noise level (Quiet Mark certified products are a good bet) and consider smart features, such as fridge temperature control and energy monitoring.





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DARREN CHUNG

KITCHEN ISLANDS

A well-designed centrepiece in your kitchen can enhance both style and practicality. **Scarlett Deamer** explores the key factors to consider when planning this feature

Above: This clever design is a generous size, with plenty of cupboard space on both sides and a nifty recessed area facing the kitchen for two bar stools to be stored (simon-taylor.co.uk)

An island is a much-desired feature for modern kitchens, and highly coveted by homebuyers, often boosting a property's value. As well as providing supplementary workspace and storage, it can also be a relaxing backdrop when you're entertaining guests as well as a stunning wow-factor centrepiece for your house. Read our advice to help you decide if a kitchen island would work for your home.

Planning your layout

When exploring the feasibility of a kitchen island, there are some practical considerations to keep in mind. As a general rule, you'll want at least 1m between fixed perimeter cabinets and an island to ensure there is enough room to move around the kitchen comfortably. Size matters, too: an island unit smaller than 2m x 1m may not provide enough workspace or storage to make it a practical, cost-effective choice. So don't try to shoehorn one in if it doesn't fit with the overall design.

Next, think about your lifestyle and how an island would meet your requirements. For example, do you enjoy entertaining guests, cooking elaborate recipes

or want the space to double as a makeshift work from home desk? How you intend on using your kitchen will impact the appliances and features that you want to include in the design. Planning space for sinks, ovens and hobs is imperative to make sure the room and island work for you. Depending on how you kit it out, plumbing, electrics and gas connections may all be required in your island – and this should be looked at from the start, not left to the end when integrating the infrastructure will be much more invasive and therefore more expensive.

Lighting is another facet of the design that needs to be considered when planning your unit. Overhead pendant lighting can add some character to the setting and invitingly illuminates dining and cooking areas with a soft hue. If you are looking for something with a bit of wow-factor to really make a statement, but don't want it to cost a fortune, LED strip lights can be rebated into the underside of worktops to create a cosy glow. You can also experiment with dimmer switches or sensor lighting to create the ideal ambience for your lifestyle.

Understanding costs

With prices ranging from around £250 for workbench-style units to over £11,500 for high-end bespoke designs with built-in appliances, islands come in a wide variety of options to suit different budgets. Kitchen specialists, Magnet have noted that the average spend on a new unit is around £5,276, with self builders dedicating around 21% of their total kitchen budget to the island.

Your unit will normally be part of your new kitchen fit-out, therefore many of the cost implications relate to the overall room's design and construction. When planning the space, hiring an architect or designer typically comes with higher fees. Designing it yourself or using in-store services from retailers like Ikea or Wren can be a more budget-friendly alternative. However, a professional will

be able to apply their specialist knowledge and extensive experience to help you create a functional and attractive unit, while the cheaper route will only be effective if you are clear on your wants and needs for the space and your preferred aesthetic. The same goes for the construction method of the island unit itself. A prefabricated system will be a low-cost alternative to a bespoke design, but you will need to do a little bit more research to make sure you find one that fits your requirements.

The number of appliances, plumbing necessities and your chosen lighting options will also impact the price. If you have chosen to go for a statement feature such as a waterfall worktop or some striking under the counter lighting, the price of these will also be affected by the material you choose and who installs them.

If you're a seasoned DIYer, you might be able to fit the kitchen island units and certain types of worktop yourself. However, anything that involves plumbing and electrics is best left in the hands of the pros to ensure a safe, Building Regs-compliant install. Similarly, if you're dealing with luxury materials or a complex design, the reassurance of using an experienced fitter who will come back to fix any faults is likely to be well worth the money.

Multifunctional space

One of the biggest advantages of a kitchen island is its versatility. By incorporating additional seating, whether bar stools or a dedicated dining area, you can enhance its functionality. It can serve as a casual dining spot, a place to study for school or work remotely, or even a creative hub for messy arts and crafts on a rainy weekend.

Designing an interesting split-level island can also help ensure uncongested circulation for users and help define different zones. Mixed worktop heights can be used to create a natural transition through your kitchen into the living areas, or from cooking to dining spaces. This type of layout works well for properties with smaller floorplans that might not have room for a separate table in a kitchen-diner. This unique style is sure to add some flavour to your interiors, as it's a clever twist on the classic island design.

Is it right for me?

If your kitchen is fairly small, you're on a tight budget or you need to prioritise working space above culinary uses, a traditional island may not be the right choice for your self build project – but this doesn't mean that there aren't

WHERE SHOULD MY ISLAND GO?

The island should not obstruct any movement, allowing you and guests to circulate around the space freely. Below are some common kitchen configurations and advice on where to place your island.

U-SHAPED KITCHEN Place the island in the centre of the U to create a natural flow around the area.

SINGLE WALL GALLEY The island should be positioned facing the cupboard area, so everything you need for cooking is in close proximity.

L-SHAPED KITCHEN An island will help create a clear distinction between the kitchen and the other space adjacent to it, so try placing it at the end of the run or in the middle of the open-plan zone.



Above: Built from solid walnut with a single slab Nero Marquina marble top, this minimalist design gives an airy feel to the kitchen. The exposed lower shelf allows you to showcase your kitchenware (nakedkitchens.com)

Left: Create a luxurious feature by incorporating a waterfall edge to your kitchen island. This dramatic worktop mirrors the sleek cashmere-coloured palette used throughout the kitchen, tying the island into the overall aesthetic (callerton.co.uk)

some great alternative options to consider. A peninsula, a countertop extension attached on one side, is a great solution for smaller kitchens. It adds extra counterspace without extending too far into the floor plan and taking up vital room. This configuration lends itself to becoming a breakfast bar, too, making an ideal spot for family meals. Plus, it also helps to break up a room, creating a partition between kitchen and living spaces.

Small wooden prep tables or butcher's blocks are also becoming increasingly popular thanks to their rustic look and ability to be moved as and when required. This can also be a more affordable option, as you can repurpose a suitable piece of furniture into a functional worktop with built-in storage, then upcycle it to match your style. A small freestanding unit is also movable, allowing you to easily add it to the end of your regular dining table to accommodate some extra guests, or even place it outside when hosting a relaxing summer barbecue with the whole extended family.



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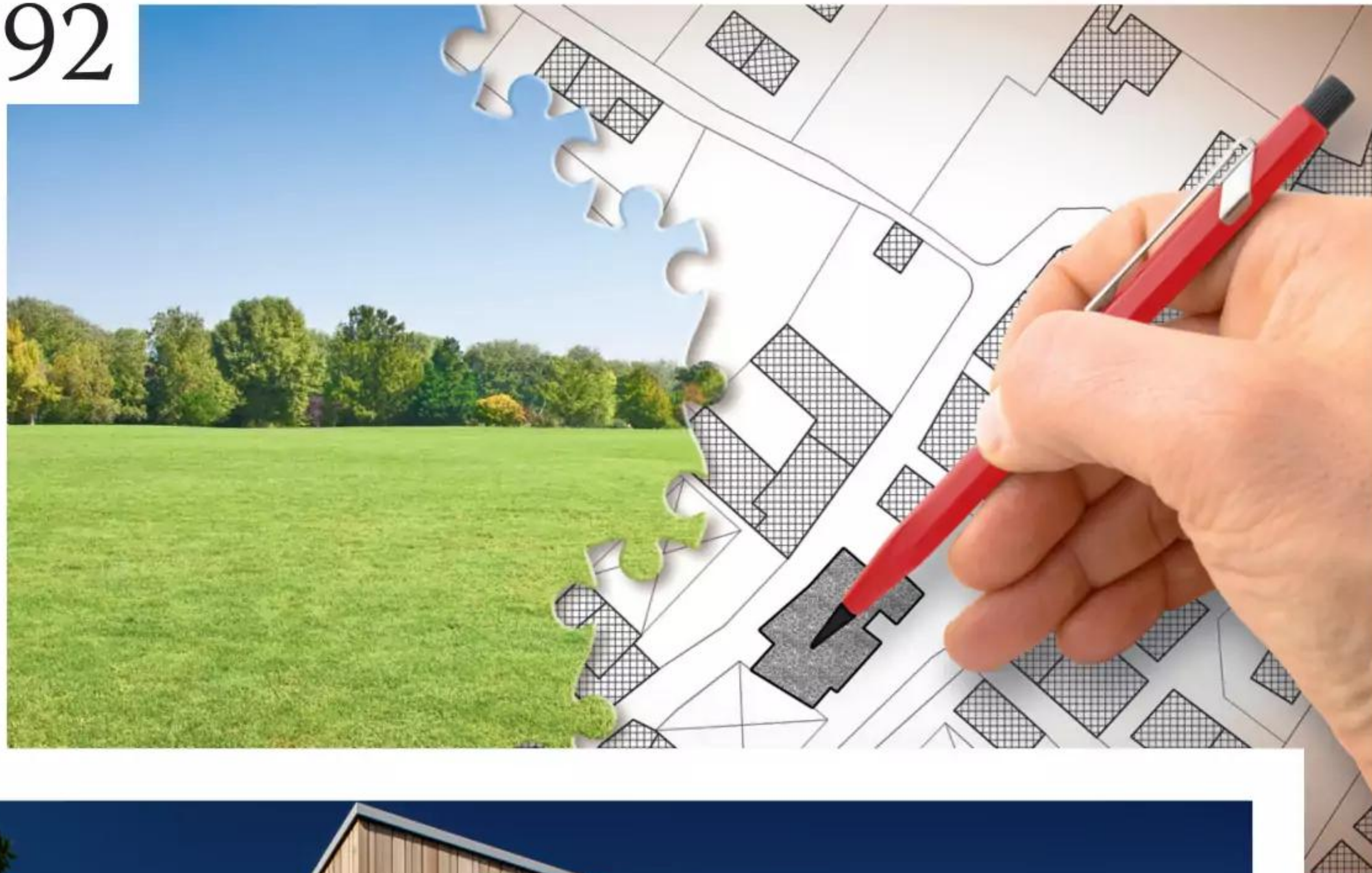
Courses are all virtual, delivered by Zoom and will allow audience participation and the ability to share experiences. The programme has courses running throughout the year. Places cost £40*.

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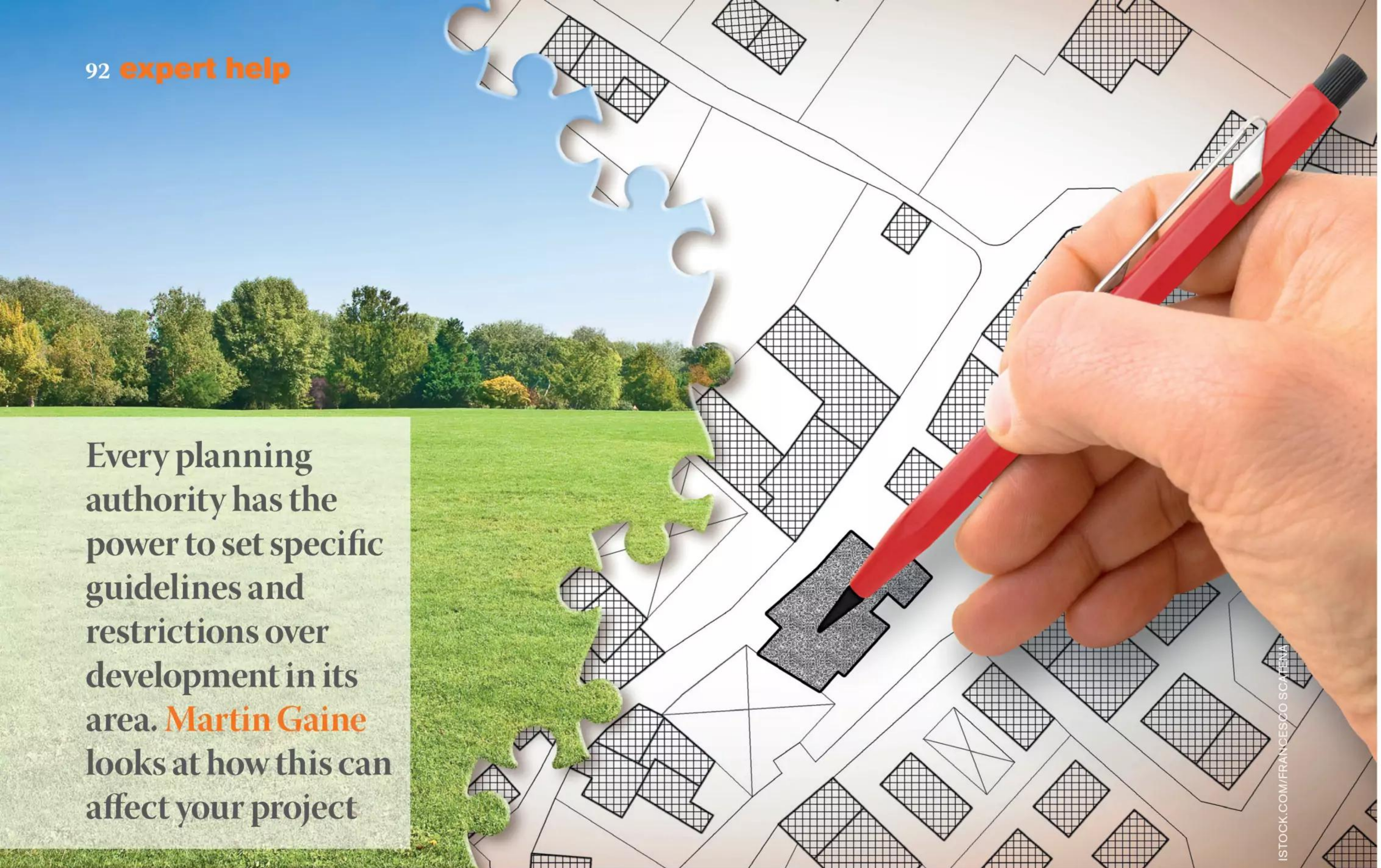
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Every planning authority has the power to set specific guidelines and restrictions over development in its area. **Martin Gaine** looks at how this can affect your project

How planning policy differs from council to council

Planning policies are the foundation of the whole planning system: if you want to know your chances of getting permission for a new development, your first step is to look up the relevant policies. But how do you work out which ones are relevant to you? National policy tends to be more strategic and high-level, while those at local council level are typically more detailed (and more useful).

To add some extra complications, there are often big differences between policies in different councils. In extreme cases, a development may be possible on one street but not on the next street over, because they fall under different authorities. In this article, I will explain how things change from national to local level and between individual areas, and how to determine which policies affect you.

The planning policy hierarchy

Let's start at the top: in England, there is a single document that provides the highest-level strategic policies. It is called the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It's worth a read (don't worry, it is only 82 pages long), especially if you want a better understanding of how the planning system as a whole operates. There are slight differences in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but each has similar national policy documents.

Most areas in England no longer have regional planning policies (the London Plan, covering the 32 London boroughs, is an exception). There are, however, moves afoot to introduce a new layer of regional planning to coordinate things like housing supply.

The most useful policies for smaller schemes are those in the Local Plan, which contains the policies adopted by your council to control development. If you are planning a home extension or a new build, this is the place to start. Note that smaller areas, such as individual

Right: Dormer windows can significantly change the character of a building and the wider area; some councils are supportive of them, whereas others restrict them to rear elevations



A TALE OF TWO COUNCILS

Neighbouring authorities often have diverging planning policies, which can lead to confusing differences in terms of what's allowed and what's not, sometimes even on the next street over. Using the London Borough of Barnet and neighbouring Hertsmere Borough Council as our guinea pigs, here's an example of how diverse policy can be.

	LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET	HERTSMERE BOROUGH COUNCIL
Local Plan documents	Local Plan (2025)	Core Strategy (2013); Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (2016)
Supplementary planning guidance	Residential Design Guidance (2016)	Planning and Design Guide (2006)
Flat conversions policy	Flat conversions not allowed on streets characterised by family housing	Flat conversions not allowed where there would be more than 1 in 5 conversions in a defined row of houses
Minimum garden areas	A minimum of 5m ² for one- to two-person dwellings, plus 1m ² for each additional occupant	Houses: minimum of 40m ² for a one-bed, up to 100m ² for a five-bed Flats: 20m ² for a one-bed, plus 10m ² for each additional bedroom
Self build	The council expresses support for self builds, as long as other policies are met	No reference to self build in policy
Homeowner extensions	Side extensions: should not be more than half the width of the main house First-floor side extensions: should be set back 1m from the front elevation Rear extensions: no more than 4m deep Dormers: should not exceed half the width or depth of the roof slope	Side extensions: should have a width significantly less than the main house, and be set back 1m from the front, with a 1m-2m gap to side boundary Rear extensions: may be up to 3.35 metres deep. Dormers: should be small and not exceed 60% of roofslope
Parking	Between 0 and 1.5 spaces per dwelling, depending on accessibility	Minimum of 1.5 spaces per one-bedroom unit and 5 spaces per six-bedroom unit

towns, villages or hamlets, also now have the power to draw up Neighbourhood Plans, with policies relating specifically to their own individual areas.

Finally, councils can introduce additional guidance in the form of supplementary planning documents (SPDs) specific to a certain area or type of development. SPDs often provide specific and detailed guidance on householder extensions and new build homes and are always worth reading when considering a new project.

How policies differ

Generally speaking, policies at national and regional level set general principles, such as reducing carbon emissions, delivering a minimum number of new homes and discouraging new development in the countryside or the green belt. Local policies then explain how this policy direction affects you in practice. The NPPF states that new homes should preferably be constructed within the boundaries of existing towns and villages, for instance, but it is individual council Local Plans that set those boundaries.

The NPPF says that extensions to houses in the green belt (basically a buffer zone between settlements and the countryside) should not be disproportionate. But it is local council policies that specify what is considered disproportionate in their specific area. A typical rule you could come across might be that you can increase the size of the house by no more than, say, 40%.



Another principle outlined in the NPPF is that new development must preserve highway safety. But Local Plans detail specific parking standards, such as how many spaces should be provided for a new home in certain areas. In urban zones, some councils set maximum car parking standards or require that developments be entirely car free. In suburban and rural areas, local authorities still set out minimum car parking standards, to ensure developments provide for the requirements of future users.

Some national policies are generic (and pretty boring) and tell you very little about what you need to do to get planning permission. It is obvious that new buildings

Above: Planning policies in towns such as Bath place significant restrictions on design and materials usage, to protect the area's heritage status



ISTOCK.COM/TRACEYAPHOTOS



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Top: Locations such as the Lake District have strict restrictions on second homes and local occupancy rates – but modern homes are still built right on the area's shorelines

Above: Parking requirements are often clearly spelled out in Local Plans and supplementary guidance

need to represent good design and protect your neighbours from overlooking or overshadowing. Some requirements are so vague as to be meaningless: how is your self build project supposed to “respect and reflect local distinctiveness”?

Local policies and guidance provide the all-important detail. Some are quite prescriptive. Examples might include: dormers are not allowed on the front elevation of houses; new homes should not be built in the rear gardens of existing houses; houses may not be converted into flats; or new homes must provide garden areas of a certain minimum size.

The impact of local pressures

The differences in policy between council areas reflect local pressures or preoccupations. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has strict rules on combining several homes into one and on the construction of double-storey basements, for instance, neither of which are particularly big issues in the rest of the country.

Whereas most councils only require affordable housing contributions for proposals that create more than 10 new homes, Reading Borough Council stands out as an exception. It requires that even proposals for a single new home make a financial contribution (10% of

the development's value) towards affordable housing, arguing that it is facing a particularly acute shortage of housing.

Design policies are stricter and more specific in sensitive areas. Bath has especially strict design policies protecting its UNESCO World Heritage status, requiring Bath stone and very specific architectural details. Less traditional is bohemian Brighton and Hove, which emphasises creative, innovative design and embraces contemporary architecture.

University towns like Oxford and Northampton have specific policies managing student housing (HMOs) and their concentration. Areas with significant tourist pressure, like the Lake District, typically have second home restrictions and local occupancy requirements.

How to find relevant policies

It is fair enough to leave the business of reading and understanding planning policies to your architect or planning consultant – they are the experts, after all. But it is not a bad idea to develop a general understanding of the rules that apply in your area.

To look up local policies, go to your council's website (usually councilname.gov.uk), click on “planning” and then “policies”. You will be presented with a list of policy documents of various types. It may take time to work out which are relevant, but don't be daunted.

A shortcut to understanding the council's policies for extensions and other householder developments is to find a similar application that has been decided recently in your area. All planning authorities have a database of applications on their websites, and you can search by keyword or generate a list of all submissions decided in recent weeks.

If you identify an application that looks similar to what you are proposing, click through the associated documents and look for the officer's report (sometimes known as the delegated report). Prepared by the council's case officer, this describes the site and proposal, then assesses it in light of applicable policy. Look through several different schemes to see what issues reappear so that, if necessary, you can begin to strategise on how to address them.

MARTIN GAINE



Martin Gaine runs planning consultancy Just Planning (www.just-planning.co.uk). A former case officer, he has experience on both sides of the planning divide and now specialises in helping homeowners win consent

at appeal. He is the author of *How to Get Planning Permission: An Insider's Secrets*.

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INTRODUCTION TO **SELF BUILD** **MORTGAGES**

Discover how self build mortgages work, and then check out our selection of leading lenders and products overleaf



Self builders need a very specific type of mortgage, designed to support their cashflow requirements during the journey to their dream home. This isn't the kind of product you can pick up through the high street banks – instead, you'll need a specialist lender that can respond to your particular circumstances. Here's what you need to know

What's a self build mortgage?

There are three main types of self build mortgage: advance (cost-based); arrears (value -based); and arrears (cost-based). Some lenders provide just one of these products, others may offer multiple options. Many work via specialist brokers, such as BuildStore and Mayflower, while a few lend direct.

Unlike standard high street lending, the money is released in phases at key milestones, so you can pay invoices on time. The payment stages will be pre-agreed and tailored to suit your project profile. The amount paid out per stage is a percentage of either your actual costs or the value of the works, based on your project's individual profile.

How much can I borrow?

Self build mortgage providers are regulated, so must meet affordability criteria. As is standard, they'll look at savings, equity, income, regular outgoings and outstanding debts. They'll also want to see your plans, technical drawings, insurances, build schedule and forecast project costs to check you're embarking from a realistic starting point.

You can generally borrow up to around 75%-85% of the projected end value of the house. This is the loan-to-value (LTV) ratio, and would leave you needing something in the order of a 15%-25% deposit. Some providers go as high as 95%, while others specialise in keener interest rates at a lower loan-to-value.

You can borrow on both plot and build costs, or just the build costs if you already own the land. Standard products go up to around £750,000; but some offer £1m+ mortgages.

Advance vs arrears

This refers to whether payments are made before or after each stage is complete. With an advance product,

the lender will provide the agreed sum for the relevant stage before you begin that tranche of works, boosting your cashflow. This is a great option for self builders with smaller savings or projects that require large one-off payments (such as those involving factory-made construction systems, like timber frame or SIPs).

Traditionally, arrears products offer slightly better interest rates, but you need strong cash reserves to pay your suppliers and trades on time. Once an agreed phase of work is finished, you then make a request to draw down that tranche of the mortgage. If you need money to buy the plot, this part of the loan can be offered in advance.

Cost-based vs value-based mortgages

With a value-based mortgage, the lender sends a surveyor to inspect each completed stage of works. It will then pay out at the agreed LTV percentage, based on the surveyor's opinion of the current value of the project. So, if the LTV is 80% and you've spent £40,000, your stage payment will be up to £32,000. This works well for many people, but bear the valuation can sometimes lag behind what you've spent, which may affect your cashflow.

Cost-based mortgages pay out a guaranteed amount based on your build costs, either in arrears or in advance. As there's no valuation to rely on, you can be confident you'll get the cash you're expecting, when you (and suppliers) expect it.

Finishing your project

Interest rates on self build mortgages are higher than standard products (although you'll typically pay interest-only during the works). Once the project's finished, you'll be given the option to switch to a conventional mortgage on a cheaper rate, often without any early repayment charges.



Self build & custom build mortgage table

Looking to fund your bespoke home project? Each month we round up the best deals from leading lenders and update you on what you need to know to secure the right finance

Advance Stage Payment Mortgages

Created by and exclusive to BuildStore, these mortgages provide guaranteed stage payments based on your costs before each phase of the build. This offers certainty in your budget and peace of mind that you can plan for and pay your bills on time.

Arrears Stage Payment Mortgages

These mortgages release funds after each stage of building works is completed. To trigger the payments, a valuation must take place that shows an uplift in value. BuildStore's exclusive mortgages can offer increased borrowing of up to 85% of your costs.

Get In Touch

For advice on funding options for your self or custom build project, speak to the experts at BuildStore by calling **0345 223 4647** or visit **www.buildstore.co.uk**

These products are chosen for illustrative purposes, and were available at the time of going to press.

KEY FOR TABLE: ★ BuildStore Exclusive Product | **SB** Self Build Mortgage | **CB** Custom Build Mortgage | **LTV** Loan to Value

Lender		Mortgage Type	Payment Schedule	Contact	LTV Land	LTV End Value	Interest Rate	1st Stage Payment
Chorley BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.15%	DPP & Building Regs
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	5.99%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.84%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.99%	DPP & Building Regs
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	5.85%	DPP & Building Regs
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	5.79%	DPP & Building Regs
Tipton & Coseley	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	5.94%	DPP & Building Regs
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.34%	DPP & Building Regs
Chorley BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	40%	40%	5.40%	Foundations
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	5.79%	Foundations
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	70%	70%	5.44%	Foundations
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.69%	Foundations
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	5.70%	Foundations
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.60%	Foundations
Stafford Railway BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	5.95%	Foundations
Tipton & Coseley BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	5.69%	Foundations
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.14%	Foundations
Beverley BS		SB	Arrears	01482 881510	50%	80%	5.84%	Wall Plate
Earl Shilton BS		SB	Arrears	01455 844422	75%	75%	6.14%	Flexible
Hanley Economic BS		SB	Arrears	01782 255000	80%	80%	6.24%	Foundations
Melton Mowbray BS		SB	Arrears	01664 414141	n/a	75%	6.00%	Foundations
Penrith BS		SB	Arrears	01768 863675	80%	80%	5.99%	Foundations
Saffron BS		SB & CB	Arrears	0333 015 2970	80%	80%	6.19%	Flexible
Suffolk BS		SB	Arrears	0330 123 0723	70%	70%	5.90%	Foundations



MIKE COUCH & PAUL CRAIG

SPECIFYING EXTERNAL CLADDING

From aesthetics to sustainability, longevity and more, architect **Opinder Liddar** gives the lowdown on how to choose the best exterior materials for your project

Above: Catnic Urban powder-coated steel wraps down the roof and walls of this contemporary barn-style self build, with sections of vertical cedar cladding to further bed the house into its rural setting

Right: This extension by Emil Eve Architects features Danish handmade waterstruck bricks from Petersen Tegl (available in the UK through European Building Materials), laid in intricate patterns to add depth and character

Choose your cladding well, and you could deliver the kind of project that appears on Build It magazine covers and stands out as the pride of future generations. Your home's external finish will articulate the elegance of the design and can reference the area's local character. Get the decision wrong, however, and you (and your neighbours) will be staring at a carbuncle for the life of the building.

As a self builder, your home is likely to be constructed using cavity wall, timber frame, oak, insulated concrete formwork (ICF) or structural insulated panels (SIPs). This is the load-bearing part of the building. In theory, you could apply any weatherproof material to the outside of that superstructure to protect it. The external material or outer leaf of the property is the cladding.

However, creating a well-designed building takes great skill, careful selection of materials and attention to detail in terms of how they sit together. The cladding you choose and how you use it will also influence the value of your property. Here are some practical considerations to help with your decision-making.

Keep it simple

When setting your materials palette, the best approach is to use a restrained combination of claddings. You can

then use architectural forms and clever detailing to provide visual interest. So, rather than applying a range of different materials to break up a flat facade, features like a bay window, step in the wall or change in orientation of the external material can be all that's needed to add wow factor. This could allow you to make use of the same cladding across the whole building.

This approach was adopted in many historic buildings. Victorian brick houses and classic stone public buildings are a case in point, demonstrating how a simple palette of materials can be combined to create architecture that



TAMARA WILKINSON

everyone wants to admire and protect. Successful modern buildings also limit the palette of materials used in their design, creating strong form and order. Less successful examples seem to throw a patchwork of claddings onto the structural core, often in an effort to cover up fundamental issues in the design.

Focusing on locally-sourced materials can help your design sit well with vernacular building styles and help ease tricky planning issues. Many modern house designs cleverly reinterpret the use of the likes of stone, brick and even thatch. So, you don't have to copy what's already there – using the same material, detailed in a contemporary way, can be a great alternative.

If you're building a small extension or carrying out a loft conversion, you can often do this under permitted development (PD) rules, without having to apply for full planning permission. One caveat of PD is that the materials of the new extension must match the existing house – so if you do want to change the look and distinguish new from old, some local authorities may ask you to submit for planning.

Interplay with other finishes

Your home's cladding interrelates with other design and material choices on both a practical and aesthetic level. It's important, for instance, to get the proportion of windows to solid wall area right in order to achieve balance in your design. A good designer will consider the relative amounts and kinds of cladding and glass. They will show you the external appearance of the design from different vantage points to demonstrate how the building is balanced. You could think of windows as the eyes of a building: designed incorrectly, they can make a house appear as though it's squinting.

Also consider the configuration of the roof within your design, and spend time on the roof tiles specification. At the Build It Education House (www.self-build.co.uk/our-house), supplier Dreadnought Tiles suggested a blend of three clay tiles in different hues. It took a little while for Chris Batesmith and I to be convinced that the proposed mix would work – but we reviewed a large sample area against our window frame and render choices before placing the order, and saw that the combination would work very well. The different colours complement each other effectively on the 37.5° roof.

Have confidence to experiment in your combination of cladding and design. I find that a shallow roof tends to look wrong, particularly over a long span. Because rain is less inclined to run off a flat slope quickly, a low pitch may push you towards using large, heavy concrete tiles – which does nothing to enhance your design. I find that using a steeper angle and smaller size of tile is generally much more appealing. If you cannot change the pitch of the roof, then perhaps consider adding dormers or a bay window to add extra kerb appeal.

Sustainable choices

When building a new home or adding an extension, there's an opportunity to keep your carbon and energy footprints in check. The internal load bearing structure does the lion's share of the work in terms of thermal performance, but including an extra layer of external



LONGEVITY & FUTURE-PROOFING

Ideally you want to use materials that are low maintenance as well as durable. Liaise with the supplier and ask what upkeep is required. For instance, treated timber will need repainting or re-staining every five years or so – but some species can be used without finishes and left to weather naturally. Some forms of render include the colour throughout the material, which can be more robust than use of a render material which is then painted on top. Redecoration or repair works to external finishes may require scaffolding, adding expense.

Brick and stone are relatively maintenance-free (repointing may not be necessary for 30+ years). They're also highly resistant to contact from people or brushes from passing traffic. Materials like metal cladding may not fare so well in these zones.

Think carefully before specifying more unusual products. Colour-matching bricks, stone or timber can be fairly simple if replacement is needed – but a more specific product like a particular colour board, tile or profile may not be available some years after you have completed the work. If this section of cladding is in a prominent area, then you may need to replace the whole facade rather than being able to insert a replacement portion because you can't match the shape, colour or type any more.

Above: Replacing an old bungalow on the Norfolk broads, this self build by Platform 5 Architects features blackened timber shingles for the roof and side elevations, with the same material left untreated on the front and rear facades – achieving a stylish look with a simple twist



Above: Uncoated Western Red cedar from Millworks is paired with an off-white render and sleek rainwater goods on this contemporary self build home

insulation behind the cladding can greatly reduce heating bills. Your designer must specify an appropriate insulation and ensure it's used in a way that won't create interstitial condensation (a build-up of moisture in the wall).

How materials are made and where they come from are increasingly important aspects of a sustainable building project. Some local authorities will ask for a statement of the embodied carbon of a product. Products such as fired clay bricks and glass require a lot of heat energy to make, so you'd think wood – which simply needs cutting and drying – would have a lower embodied impact. However, if it was grown far away, how much energy was needed to transport it all the way to your site?

Your carbon footprint doesn't just come down to the energy expended making and transporting a product, but also its life cycle. External materials need to be very hardwearing to protect your building, and UK-sourced timber may not afford the longevity of European products – although manufacturers such as Vastern Timber are using heat treatment techniques to imbue UK-sourced softwood with greater durability.

There's been a tendency over the last century for materials to be brought in from anywhere, which means that mass housing no longer has a local signature, as the same styles and products are now used nationwide. Before globalization buildings were, by necessity, made from local materials and adapted to suit local construction techniques and styles, which translated into regional vernacular designs. Looking at historic buildings in your area can inform your choices – the local clay used in roof tiles will fire to a particular colour, for instance, while stone and slate will have a signature hue.

Another relevant sustainability question is whether materials can be recycled at the end of their useful life? Metal products made from aluminium – which is used for windows, doors, guttering etc – can easily be recycled into their next iteration, whereas PVCu products are difficult to reuse elsewhere, so are far less sustainable.

Orientation & fixing

When designing a building, it's vital to consider its exposure to the elements and whether it's in a high-risk area. For example, in the UK, a site near the coast facing south-west is going to be significantly impacted by high winds, rainfall and potential sea spray, whereas a site in the north is likely to experience more periods of cold weather and potentially snow. Therefore, your selection of materials needs to consider your local climate. Many renders and metals are prone to saltwater corrosion, for instance, so if you're self building in a coastal location you may need to specify special marine-grade materials.

How you attach your materials to the structural leaf is also of concern. When fixing timber cladding you need to use galvanised or stainless steel screws to prevent a reaction with the tannin in the timber, which

can otherwise cause corrosion that appears as black spots. These tannins can also leech out and stain render placed alongside wood cladding, so consider use of stop beads or a drip fixing to prevent runoff reaching the finish below. Timber cladding needs to have a moisture content of less than 16% at installation to prevent too much shrinkage once it is in place. Timber cladding is often overlapped for this reason, otherwise you may see gaps develop between boards over time, as the natural material changes shape and moves.

If your site is exposed, then fixings need to resist high winds as well as rainfall. Cladding panels are usually fixed to a rail or batten system that is then secured to the actual wall. This is because you need to ensure there is ventilation behind the cladding to stop further corrosion. The Building Safety Act 2022 requires cavity barriers between floors and sometimes even around doors and windows to stop fire spreading in these spaces.

CONTACTS

Catnic 01244 892449 www.catnic.com
European Building Materials 020 3805 0920 www.ebmsupplies.com **Furness Brick** 01229 462411 www.furnessbrick.co.uk **K-Rend** 028 2826 0766 www.k-rend.co.uk **Millworks** 01223 967733 www.millworks.co.uk **Northcot Brick** 0800 038 9575 www.northcotbrick.co.uk **Russwood** 01540 673648 www.russwood.co.uk **Vastern Timber** 01793 853281 www.vastern.co.uk

OPINDER LIDDAR



Opinder Liddar is a Build It Award-winning designer and a director at Lapd Architects. He specialises in self build homes and renovation projects, and is a regular expert at Build It Live. For more information

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Colour-matching windows & doors

The Residence Collection's **Jo Trotman** reveals why it pays to be bold when specifying window and door finishes

When little children draw pictures of houses, anything goes as long as it's colourful. A bright

vermillion front door set against sky-blue window frames is the perfect pairing. One upstairs window picks up its hue from the lushly crayoned grass, while another is yellow to match the roof. And that's before we get onto the lovely purple chimney pots. Surely everyone would be happy to live in a house as bespoke as this?

Then, of course, we grow up. Our sense of colour matures, convention kicks in and we become more attuned to external influences when making our decisions. As a self builder or renovator, you might start to worry about what friends, neighbours or planners might think, and before long your project gets a colour scheme you never really wanted. But this is your big chance to do things differently, and you don't have to pass it up!

Can I mix-and-match door and window colours?

Absolutely – but to ensure you're happy with the result, the first step is to resist the unwritten rules of what's considered acceptable. Window and door colours don't have to be the same, provided they complement each other and the other core external materials (bricks, cladding, roofing etc). But complementary is a broad brush: who's to say everything has to be muted or monochrome?

If you want to add some stand-out character to your property with a bold front door, for instance, then go for it! You'll just need to spend a bit more time researching what window frame colours you think will pair best with it. A white front door can be teamed with pretty much any frame you like (and vice versa). But if you want to be more adventurous, a daring black or dark shades of blue, plum and green will make a modern statement and can



look fantastic when contrasted with the right window colour.

Shouldn't I just match the neighbours?

Have you ever holidayed somewhere exotic, where the homes are all brightly coloured but none of them match? Most of us probably won't go to such extremes, yet there's nothing stopping you pushing the boundaries to achieve the look you want. Yes, there are some styles of window might better suit certain types of property – but you don't have to go with the grain on finishes. And who knows, you might inspire other people on your street to be more daring with their choices.

Your home's exterior marks its first impression, so make it unforgettable. The right front door and window pairings can set the architectural tone and quality of both your house and the spaces beyond, showcasing your style while creating welcoming kerb appeal.

Colour combos to try

Pairing window frames and front doors isn't just about aesthetics; it's about the story you want your home to tell. Here are a few examples for creating distinctive effects that might just spark your own imagination:

Timeless & traditional: White window frames paired with a muted front door – perhaps in deep red, navy

blue or forest green – will deliver classic elegance. This combination exudes sophistication

and is perfect for period properties with brick or stone facades. **Bold & contemporary:** Black or anthracite frames could be teamed with a vibrant door in mustard yellow, teal or daring red to offer a striking modern contrast. Great for adding drama and personality to minimalist or industrial-style homes.

Natural & rustic: Combine soft grey or sage green windows with a wooden or earthy-toned door in oak, clay or terracotta. Ideal for blending your home into a countryside setting, while adding warmth and individuality.

Bright & cheerful: Pair white or cream window frames with a bright door in yellow, coral or pastel blue for a playful, characterful look that works wonderfully on cottages, beach houses or any home where you're keen to radiate positivity and charm.

Sleek & monochrome: For a high-end contemporary look, match black or grey window frames with a monochrome door. The minimalist aesthetic projects a sense of modern luxury that's great for urban homes.



blue or forest green – will deliver classic elegance. This combination exudes sophistication

Above: Stylish Residence 9 windows in the Painswick colourway, paired with an oak finish door

Left: Residence² windows perfectly complement the exterior render and timber features of this new build home

JO TROTMAN is marketing manager at The Residence Collection, a premium window and door designer, and has over 25 years' experience in the sector. The company's range of flush window and door systems span authentic heritage-style and refined contemporary systems, all incorporating a raft of modern features and benefits – including slim frames, excellent acoustic properties and fantastic thermal performance. To discuss your project with the team, call **01452 341554** or visit **www.residencecollection.co.uk**

Battery storage at home: is it worth the money?

Nigel Griffiths looks into the pros and cons of home energy storage systems, whether using grid-only energy or on-site renewables

The trend for storing electricity in home batteries is relatively recent, with 2020 marking the start of a surge in uptake. Traditionally, it was only considered when self builders and homeowners were installing solar electric (PV) panels or some other form of site-generated renewable power. Now, however, we're beginning to see battery storage systems being specified independently of renewables, driven by the desire to take advantage of cheap overnight electricity available under time-of-use energy tariffs. This could be a game changer in terms of the economics of battery storage.

In this article, I'm exploring the pros, cons, costs, carbon emission implications and potential savings on energy bills of installing battery storage – both with and without microgeneration. I'll also look at the potential for interfacing with heat pumps, as well as the key factors that can affect performance, such as patterns of use.

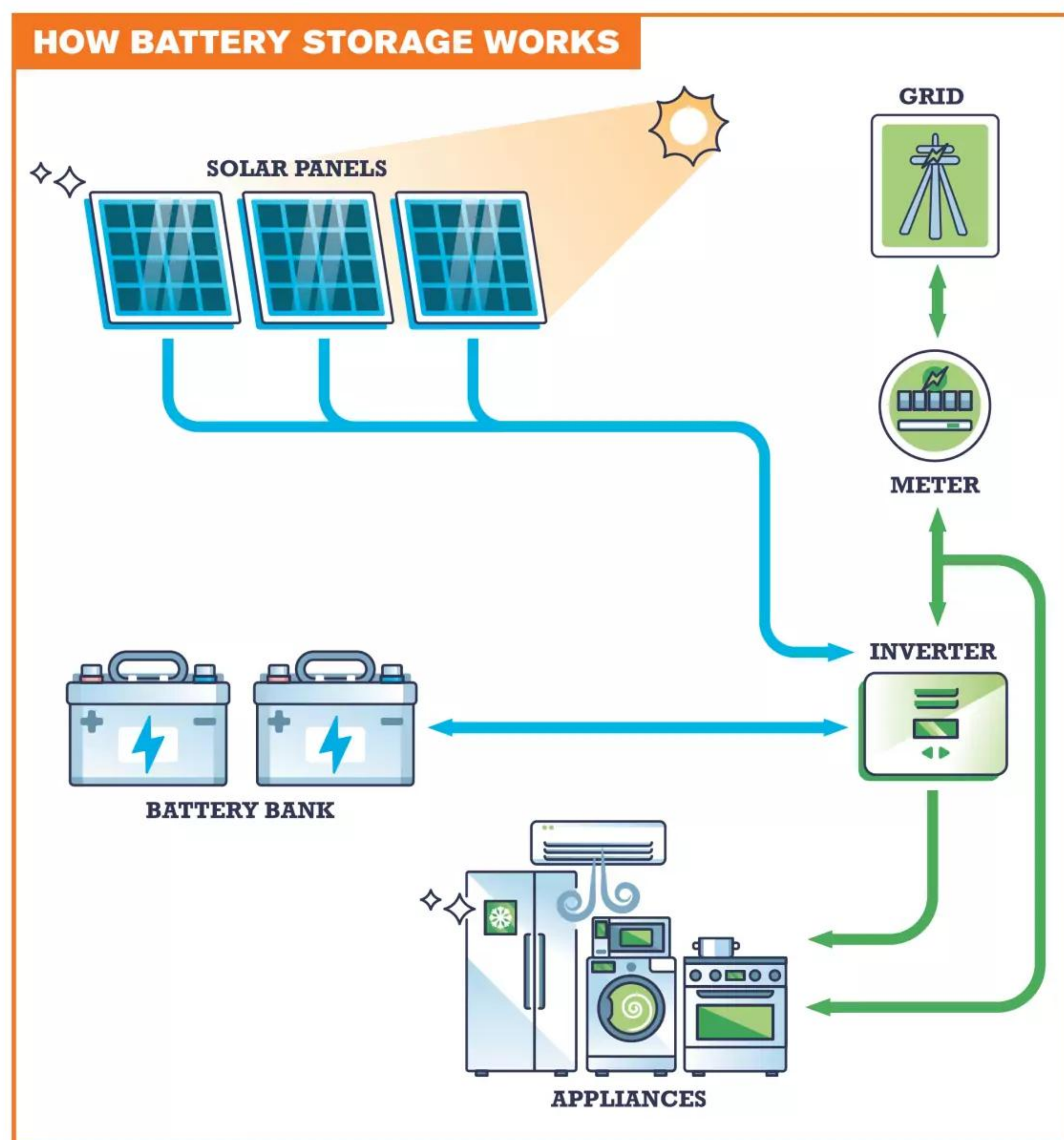
What is battery storage?

Before we get too deeply into this, let's make sure that we understand the basics. Battery storage systems are designed to collect electrical power and store it for later use. The power input might come from a renewable source such as solar PV, or from the grid.

Domestic batteries are low voltage, so they always come with an inverter to transform the current to and from the higher 230V that's required for domestic use. Installers should be members of the Renewable Energy Consumers Code (RECC), or similar, and certified under the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS).

Battery size

Domestic battery systems range in capacity from 2kWh to 20kWh. For reference, a 1kW heater operating for one hour would use 1kWh of electricity. The law of diminishing returns applies to batteries. The larger the system, the more self-generated and/or nighttime power you will be able to store – but there comes a point where the savings are outweighed by the costs of adding more capacity.



The average house using around 8kWh of electricity per day, and most domestic battery systems are currently within the 5kWh to 10kWh range. For context, an electric car battery will be more like 30kWh to 100kWh.

Costs & savings

The cost of domestic battery systems of course varies according to size and supplier. Including installation, you might expect to pay around £6,000 for a small system (3kWh to 5kWh), and more like £10,000 for larger models, such as Tesla's 13.5kWh Powerwall 3. Note that some systems are modular, which means more storage can be added at a reasonable cost.

How much you'll save on bills depends on how you generate and use the energy, and the price of electricity (not just today, but across the useful life of the battery). While capital costs remain at the £6,000-£10,000 level, a storage system is currently unlikely to pay for itself during the installation's lifetime. Battery lifespan is not yet clearly known, but 15 years is commonly quoted, and new systems often have a guarantee of 10 years.

The average gas-heated house spends £800 per year on electricity. If a battery system lasted 15 years and cost £6,000 to install, you would need to achieve electricity savings of at least £400 per year to make the financials stack up. A relatively small battery storage system is very unlikely to save as much energy as this.

Battery storage with PV

Solar PV panels only produce electricity during the daytime, which means many households generate an excess that they can't use on site. Rather than exporting this extra energy to the grid, battery storage enables you to make use of your own electricity at night.

How much this saves you depends on your energy usage profile. If there is plenty of daytime demand then you may use most of your PV-generated energy and have little to gain from adding a storage system. If the house is unoccupied during the daytime, then you will have more to gain from a storage system.

Savings also depend on whether you get a reasonable price for any electricity exports – if the rate is good, then it reduces the financial attraction of battery storage. The Smart Export Guarantee means that all energy suppliers of a certain size must offer to buy excess electricity. Some of the rates offered are very low, so check carefully if you expect to be selling power to the grid.

Distributed energy and resilience are often mentioned as reasons to invest in battery storage systems. If the supply goes down then you have something to keep you going. Admittedly it doesn't happen that often, but it could be a reason to consider PV and battery storage.

If you're investing in a home battery as part of a new microgeneration system (alongside PV, for instance, or a wind turbine) then you won't have to pay VAT. For those who already have solar PV and are thinking of investing in battery storage, a rule change in early 2024 means you no longer have to pay VAT to add it. However, a standalone battery without microgeneration will still be liable for VAT.

Can a battery power my heat pump?

It's a common myth that you can use a solar PV system to run a heat pump. PV output peaks in summer and space heating demand peaks in winter – so you have a complete mismatch here. Unfortunately, domestic battery systems won't help with this inter-seasonal issue, as at best they can store energy for a single night in spring or autumn after a sunny day. What's more, a battery's maximum capacity is similar to daily demand from a heat pump, and your PV won't be producing much energy in winter.

Battery storage without PV

If you're on a time-of-use electricity tariff, it's possible to take energy from the grid at night when it's cheap, store it in batteries and then use it throughout the day, rather than buying in higher price electricity.

Under most Economy 7 tariffs, night-time electricity is less than half the cost of the daytime peak rates, so there's potential for substantial savings. If you used no energy at all at night and had sufficient storage for everything you needed during peak times, you could cut your electricity bill by 50%. In reality, nobody's usage is this regulated. Even if it were, it's marginal as to whether a battery storage system could pay back within its expected lifespan. Plus, if you have a heat pump, you're likely to have a high peak electricity demand. You'd need a very big battery storage system to serve in winter, pushing up the capital cost.

One question worth asking is whether the wide gap between peak and off-peak electricity prices will be maintained indefinitely. The answer is we simply don't

CLOSER LOOK ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF BATTERY STORAGE

There's no such thing as a free lunch. Battery storage might save money and help to reduce the carbon intensity of the electricity supply overall, but it's important to note batteries do have significant environmental impact. The main culprit here comes from the extraction of lithium used in most modern battery systems. Depending on system setup, it generally takes a few years for the embodied CO₂ in domestic battery storage systems to be repaid. Bearing in mind the batteries are not expected to last more than 15 years on average, this becomes significant. There are other important environmental impacts of lithium-ion batteries:

- Air pollution in manufacture (eg silicon dioxide particulate matter).
- There have been several major incidents of land and water pollution arising from lithium mining, particularly in Chile.
- Cobalt is often used in batteries, much of which is mined in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where there are child labour issues.
- There are also serious concerns over end-of-life impacts from batteries, and further risk of pollution.

The fact much of this pollution takes place far from the UK does not mean the impact is any less. There is a danger that, in trying to achieve zero carbon, we export a different kind of issue elsewhere. But positive initiatives are being adopted in the UK. Some companies use sustainable sourcing policies, such as repurposing used vehicle batteries and giving them a second life as home energy storage systems.

know. If lots of us switch to time-of-use tariffs and buy battery storage, the situation could quickly change. Perhaps we'll see more dynamic pricing, where costs quickly respond to the needs of the grid.

Some suppliers' time-of-use pricing encourages consumers to charge up their batteries at night and sell it back to the supplier at a higher rate during times of peak demand. You can actually make a profit this way, as some peak export rates are higher than import rates in the middle of the night. Effectively the energy company is employing pricing mechanisms to get consumers to use domestic battery systems as part of a smart grid, which may indicate the way of the future – a fully integrated, flexible electricity-based energy system.

Interface with electric vehicles

Electric car owners already have a large battery storage system on or near their premises. Depending on the manufacturer, model and domestic charger installed, you may be able to use the batteries in reverse (bidirectionally). So, as well as charging your car from the grid or from your PV array, the battery can also power your house. This is known as vehicle-to-home (V2H) or vehicle-to-grid (V2G). If your car is normally at home in the daytime, it may make sense to use it to supply electricity at peak times, only charging from the grid at times of lowest cost. Octopus Energy, for example, has already trialled this approach.

NIGEL GRIFFITHS



Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco renovation, and is the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. A former director of the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance, he advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem.



How much does a front door cost?

A key consideration for self builders and renovators, a quality new entrance can set the tone for your home. We take a look at front door prices and what the options are for different budgets **WORDS** ANNA-MARIE DESOUZA

Above: Deuren's Tavole front door costs from £12,000, including installation. The bespoke unit has an irregular linear design for an eye-catching statement

Right: Urban Front's Raw E80 Pivot Bronze, priced from £14,353, features a bronze finish to the exterior and a RAL painted internal side

Your front door is more than just a functional necessity. It plays a key role in underpinning your home's security, thermal performance and kerb appeal. Whether you're self-building, renovating or simply upgrading your entrance, this is a decision that deserves careful consideration. With front door costs ranging from a few hundred pounds to well over £10,000, you'll want to fully understand what you're getting for your money before specifying.

A range of factors affect the final price, from material and size to glazing, locking systems and installation. So, what should you look out for to get the best value for your budget, and how much you can expect to pay for different types of front door? We've spoken to industry-leading door specialists to find out what really drives the costs.

Key price factors

In general, the door's primary material is the number one factor influencing how much it will cost, followed closely by size and design complexity. "The price of oak, for instance, is at an all time high since the Ukraine/Russia war," says Elizabeth Assaf, designer at Urban Front. "The cost of logistics since Brexit has pushed up the price of timber generally, as the majority of it comes from abroad. Size is undoubtedly a factor, too, and we're seeing that more and more people want bigger doors."

Numerous other considerations will come into play. "The main factors influencing the cost of a front door are its security features, thermal performance, and the materials used," says Matt Higgs, managing director at Kloeber. "For example, a basic PVCu door with minimal security specifications and modest thermal efficiency might cost as little as £1,200. In contrast, a premium aluminium door featuring advanced security components, PAS 24 certification and superior insulation can range anywhere from £2,500 to £7,000-plus."

Material matters

Your choice of door materials and finishes will have a huge impact on both aesthetics and performance. Premium systems not only look great but contribute towards improved energy efficiency, security and durability – ultimately delivering a high-quality, long-lasting result.

PVCu doors are at the affordable end of the market, typically priced between £340 and £725. They're low-maintenance and affordable upfront, but may not deliver long-term performance. "PVCu tends to sit at the lower end of the cost spectrum, followed by composite, with aluminium and timber typically commanding higher prices," says

Matt. "In terms of durability, both aluminium and timber systems should outperform conventional plastic-based alternatives thanks to their structural integrity."

Composite doors are a mid-range option, usually priced from £1,000 to £3,500. "They are made from a combination of materials," says Jonathan Brignall, sales director at Solidor. "For example, our doors feature a 44mm solid timber core with 2mm scratch-resistant skin, which is made from the same durable plastic as LEGO." Some manufacturers offer a range of surface finishes,



CLOSER LOOK FRONT DOOR COSTS

We've canvassed four leading UK door suppliers to give you indicative costs for various sizes and specifications of front door. Note that we're not able to reproduce in-depth specifications here (U-values, security certifications, glass panels etc). So, these prices are intended as a yardstick, but it's vital you seek project-specific quotes for your new front door.

SUPPLIER	PRODUCT	MATERIAL	SIZE (HxW)	SUPPLY PRICE ESTIMATE	INSTALL COST ESTIMATE
GFD Homes	Solidor Palermo composite (side-hung)	Timber core composite	2,100 x 900mm	£890	Approx. £600
GFD Homes	Solidor Edinburgh 2 composite (side-hung)	Timber core composite	2,100 x 900mm	£1,060	Approx. £600
Kloeber	FunkyFront timber (side-hinged)	Insulated timber core	2,100 x 1,000mm	£2,760	£400
Kloeber	UberFront aluminium (side-hinged)	Insulated aluminium core	2,100 x 1,000mm	£2,845	£400
Urban Front	Parma E80 (side-hinged)	Insulated timber core with European Oak finish	2,100 x 1,040mm	£6,573	£1,000+
Deuren	Tavole	Solid engineered timber	2,950 x 1,230mm	£12,000 (supply + install)	Included
Urban Front	Raw E80 Pivot Bronze (pivot)	Insulated timber core with Bronze finish	2,400 x 1,500mm	£14,353	£1,000+



such as metal, stone or oak. Composite doors typically offer superior longevity and security compared to PVCu. Timber doors are prized for their premium aesthetics and high degree of customisation. "The beauty of timber is that it

provides a lot of design possibilities, adding texture and depth, coupled with solid performance when correctly maintained," says Elizabeth. "With good aftercare, a timber door can surpass other materials in terms of longevity," says Matt. Prices can range from under £1,000 up to over £12,000 depending on size, wood type and detailing. Some timber doors feature steel reinforcement within the core. Aluminium is ideal for achieving a modern, minimalist look alongside exceptional strength. Prices typically range between £2,500 and £8,000. It's inherently low-maintenance and offers excellent resistance to warping, swelling and rot – although aluminium itself is a poor insulator. Manufacturers therefore incorporate thermally broken frames and foam-filled cores to help mitigate heat loss and improve overall efficiency.

Installation costs

Some suppliers, such as Deuren, both supply and fit your door as standard – so installation is wrapped into the quote. Others work supply-only, so you'll need to arrange a suitable trade. "Fitting costs generally range from £500 to £1,500, depending on the complexity, size and location of the door," says Matt. "Professional installation is essential for larger, heavier or bespoke units to ensure proper fit, function and performance – particularly for doors with advanced security or thermal requirements." Using experienced fitters will help ensure long-term performance and value. Plus, you may need to use either



Above left: This six-panel door from Westbury Joinery, shown in the Roman Bronze colourway, features polished chrome door furniture. Expect to pay from £6,000

Above: The aluminium UberFront from Kloeber has an insulated core and achieves an impressive U-value of 0.8W/m²K. It costs from £2,845

Left: Hormann composite doors have a leaf that's 44mm thick and PU-foamed for optimal thermal insulation. This example costs from £1,046 + VAT and fitting

recommended or suitably qualified trades in order to benefit from the manufacturer's warranty on your new door. "Incorrect installation can result in poor operation, heat loss and costs further down the line to rectify or replace the door," says Jonathan.

CONTACTS

Deuren 0800 138 6688 www.deuren.co.uk **GFD Homes** 01642 309576 www.gfdhomes.co.uk

Hormann 01530 513000 www.hormann.co.uk **Kloeber** 01487 740044 www.kloeber.co.uk **RK Door Systems** 01872 222300 www.rkdoorsystems.co.uk **Solidor** 01782 847300 www.solidor.co.uk **Urban Front** 01494 778787 www.urbanfront.com **Westbury Windows & Joinery** 01245 326510 www.westburyjoinery.com

Ask the EXPERTS

Essential advice on your problems with building, budgeting, DIY & planning from the most experienced names in the self build industry



PLANNING

Martin Gaine runs planning consultancy Just Planning (www.just-planning.co.uk). A former case officer, he has experience on both sides of the planning divide and now specialises in helping homeowners win consent at appeal. He is the author of *How to Get Planning Permission: An Insider's Secrets*.



FINANCE

Rachel Pyne is director of financial services at BuildStore (www.buildstore.co.uk). She has worked in self build finance for over 10 years and deals with a diverse portfolio of lenders across the whole market, as well as on exclusive self build and renovation mortgage products.



SUSTAINABILITY

Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and was the author of the *Haynes Eco House Manual*. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.



PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Mark Stevenson has worked as a construction professional for over 35 years and is a serial self builder. He runs project management consultancy Elsworth Projects and, as chair of NaCSBA, advocates for the interests of self builders and contributes to the success of the emerging custom build industry.



PERIOD PROPERTIES

Alan Tierney is a period property and conservation specialist. He ran an historic building consultancy, offering hands-on advice to heritage homeowners, but is now focused on renovating yet another property: Old Barnstaple House.



DESIGN

Opinder Liddar is a director at Lapd Architects (www.lapdarchitects.co.uk). The practice specialises in residential projects from extensions to new builds, making him the ideal person to answer all your home design questions.



VAT RECLAIMS

Kathy Tisdale runs Self Build VAT Reclaims (www.selfbuildvatreclaims.com), providing a professional VAT reclaim service which enables self builders and converters to focus on their project.

VAT RECLAIMS

Am I paying the right amount of VAT?

I'm renovating a property that has been empty for 15 years. My VAT-registered builder invoices me monthly at the 5% reduced VAT rate, including materials he's purchased at 20% VAT. Am I effectively paying more VAT on those materials, and can I reclaim it all? We're also building an extension; should we pay the 5% or 20% rate for this part of the work?

As you are carrying out a renovation on an existing residential property that has not been lived in for over 10+ years, you are eligible to reclaim the VAT charged on materials and labour. This is because HMRC would consider these works to be a conversion. Your builders are correct in charging you 5% VAT on their supplies of materials and labour.

Without being able to contact your chosen builder and check the invoices you have received, it seems to me that your contractor is likely charging you cost plus an uplift of 20% (their profit) and then charging you the 5% VAT on the total, ie the materials, labour and their profit.

The builder will normally be buying materials on their account, which includes their discount, so you may still be paying less for the materials than if you purchased them yourselves. The alternative would be to supply the builder with materials that you purchase yourself. Of course, by doing this you will be paying the standard VAT rate of 20%. You can then reclaim this, but it won't be as good for your cashflow as paying your builder at 5%.

Any works that are being carried out to the property, including the extension, are subject to the 5% VAT rate. Just make sure that all the works are completed before the project's completion certificate is issued, as you cannot claim for any materials or labour invoiced after that point.



ISTOCK.COM/ALICE-PHOTO

PLANNING

Can I build a new house on the boundary of a conservation area?

We are looking to build a two-storey, self-contained residential home in our back garden, which borders a conservation area. The proposed development would occupy a little less than a half of the garden. We're aware that the brick boundary wall was erected in 1867. Do you know if we would face any restrictions?

The government is very keen to deliver new housing and there are lots of headlines in the media about planning controls being relaxed. However, at the moment there have not been any major changes when it comes to the ability of individual homeowners to build a separate house in their back garden.

The main policy that has been implemented thus far is the reintroduction of housing targets. If your local authority can't show a five year supply of housing or it has failed the government's Housing Delivery Test, it is harder (but not impossible) for them to turn down applications for new homes.

For the most part, your chances of getting permission for a house on your land are pretty much the same as they were under the previous government. More planning reform is likely on its way, but it may not help much with small sites like yours.

The key factor that determines whether you can build is whether your proposal meets relevant planning policies. It is more difficult to get consent for new homes outside of settlement boundaries, in flood zones or in the green belt, for example.

SUSTAINABILITY

Can I combine renewable systems?

We are currently renovating our home and are looking to incorporate more sustainable tech to help heat our house. I was wondering if you had any advice on combining different sustainable heating methods?

Renewably-sourced power and heat are increasingly popular as homeowners try to reduce their carbon emissions. Although it's rare to combine more than one source, the provision of hot water from combined sources probably offers the best potential for achieving genuinely renewable heat production.

Solar thermal panels are normally used to provide domestic hot water (the water used for showering and bathing), rather than for space heating. This is because they provide much less warmth when the weather is cold - ie when the heating demand is at its greatest - so they are unsuitable for winter heating purposes.

However, a solar water heater combined with a woodburning stove that has a back boiler can provide almost year-round, zero-carbon and low-cost domestic hot water. Either the sun is shining and heating the water that way, or the woodburner is on and its output is harvested from the back boiler to the hot water cylinder. There will of course be days when the sun isn't out and the woodburner isn't lit. At these times the backup will take over, be it a boiler, immersion heater or a heat pump. It goes without saying that a good controller is needed to sense when the different inputs are available, switching between them to maintain the hot water store at a constant temperature at least use of the backup system.



Above: Jim and Barbara Hewson engaged Fiddes Architects to create a modern timber frame home in the garden of their existing property, where they had lived for 35 years. The new house features a Siberian larch exterior and a stylish Corten roof to ensure the house blends well with the local hamlet

If you are in, or close to, a conservation area, the council will expect a very high quality of architectural design for your new self build project. The planners will also want to see that there is no harm to neighbours or to protected flora and fauna, and that you have enough parking space available.

All of these considerations are fairly standard for planning applications for new homes. These criteria aren't likely to be affected by top-level government reforms (which typically tend to benefit large house building companies and developers most).

To work through these standard planning issues, it would be best to seek some input from a knowledgeable local planning consultant or architect, and consider making an approach to the council for some pre-application advice.

Build It readers Kevin Adams and Lucy Miller transformed an old stone building into a more efficient home, combining solar thermal panels on the roof and a Stovax (www.stovax.com) woodburning stove with back boiler



There is one combination of renewable heat and power that typically works well - solar water heating and solar photovoltaic (PV; providing electricity). Sometimes this is packaged up and sold together as a hybrid solar panel or PVT (PV and thermal) system. Normally this consists of a PV module with a heat collector behind it - so that the PV gets the sunlight, and any heat that passes through the PV collector can be transferred to the water heater.

The advantage is that rather than wasting the incidental heat from the sun hitting the PV panels, some of this can be harvested and used to heat hot water. Although it won't produce as much heat energy as a simple solar water heater, such setups can deliver the same or potentially higher PV output without using more roof area than a standard solar electric system. If space on your roof is at a premium, then this could be the right technology for you.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Send all your self build, renovation and conversion questions to buildit@castlemedia.co.uk or visit www.self-build.co.uk/question
Please note all correspondence may be published in the magazine

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BUILD

Want to build your own home?
Make sure you register with
your local authority for
self-build plots in your area

Find Out More at

www.nacsba.org.uk

NACSBA
National Custom & Self Build Association





FIND YOUR DREAM BUILDING PLOT

PlotBrowser.com is a 100% free-to-use plot and property finder, packed with 1,000s of home building opportunities. Here's a taster of the fantastic self build plots, renovation properties and conversions currently for sale near you

PlotBrowser.com is the latest addition to Build It's series of powerful project tools (www.buildit.co.uk/tools) designed to put you on the path to self build success.

Updated daily, this is your dedicated resource for finding genuine self build land and renovation opportunities. You'll find 1,000s of plots and properties to view nationwide, and each listing features the site details, photos, guide price and sellers' contact information – including details

such as whether the plot or property is being sold at auction and, if so, when.

Crucially, we've done a big part of the plot-hunting job for you: all our plots already have either outline or full planning permission in place, so you won't have to waste your time looking at duds that might never gain consent to build.

What's more, we've sourced the planning reference for you, so that you can quickly and easily identify the current planning consent on the relevant local authority's

website. This will arm you with a full understanding of the site's planning history and what's been permitted, so you can gauge whether the plot can support the kind of house you'd like to create.

The following pages are a sample of the plots, renovations and conversion projects available on **PlotBrowser.com** this month.

GOT A PLOT TO SELL?

Head to **PlotBrowser.com** and register as a seller to list your plot for free.



**START YOUR
PLOT SEARCH**

To find more plots with planning permission across the UK, and get free notifications of new opportunities based on your personal criteria, sign up today at www.PlotBrowser.com

ENGLAND

BERKSHIRE READING

Bishops Road
Land for sale with planning permission for the construction of a five-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £599,950
Planning: West Berkshire Council 22/01953/FULD
Contact: Downer & Co 01635 523777 sales@downer.co.uk
Plot ID: 137599

SLOUGH

Lincoln Hatch Lane
Plot of land with consent for the erection of a four-to five-bedroom property of over 186m².
Guide price: £625,000
Planning: South Buckinghamshire District Council PL/24/3735/CONDA
Contact: Shaw & Co 0208 894 3646 whitton@shawandcoestates.com
Plot ID: 137512

CAMBRIDGE CAXTON

Cambridge Road
Plot with planning consent for the demolition of the existing garage and the erection of a four-bedroom home.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: South Cambridgeshire District Council 24/04177/out
Contact: William H Brown 01763 242988 Royston@williamhbrown.co.uk
Plot ID: 137548

CHATTERIS

Gibside Avenue
Plot with planning permission for the construction of four detached homes.

TYPES OF BUILDING PLOT

New homes can be built on a range of sites and knowing about the opportunities can help you spot land with potential. Here are the key options:

BROWNFIELD SITES

This refers to previously developed land that is or was once occupied by a permanent structure. Government policy supports the provision of new housing in such locations and, on a practical level, services are likely to be in place.

DEMOLISH & REPLACE

A type of brownfield opportunity where you could knock down a building, such as an old bungalow, and construct a new home in its place. It's often more cost-effective than a renovation as VAT can be reclaimed on a new build project.

EDGE-OF-SETTLEMENT

Depending on the maps in the relevant council's Local Plan, this kind of site may or may not fall within existing built-up area boundaries. Generally, policies allow development within this zone, but control it very strictly outside. Any undeveloped land, known as greenfield,

will typically only support housing to serve the needs of agriculture, replacement dwellings and some infill.

INFILL PLOTS

Many councils define this as a small gap between an otherwise built-up frontage or group of houses. Infilling is usually allowed within settlements' development boundaries, and sometimes outside of these. Gaining consent will be more difficult in zones such as conservation areas.

GARDENS

Contrary to the 'backland development' headlines of a few years ago, planners still allow schemes on garden plots, especially in places that are considered to be built-up. You may even be lucky enough to have a large space that could work as a viable site or know someone who is willing to negotiate a fair price.

SERVICED PLOTS

Land that's ready to build on, with utilities, highway access and potentially other infrastructure already in place, as well as at least outline planning consent. This route offers more certainty over early-stage costs.

Guide price: £80,000
Planning: Fenland District Council F/YR22/1186/FDC
Contact: Auction House East Anglia 01603 505100 norwich@auctionhouse.co.uk
Plot ID: 137555

OVER

The Limes

Land with planning consent for the demolition of existing dwellings and construction of a detached home.
Guide price: £225,000
Planning: South Cambridgeshire District Council 24/03110/FUL
Contact: Cheffins 01223 214214 cambridge.residential@cheffins.co.uk
Plot ID: 137616

SOHAM

Great Fen Road
A 0.39-acre plot of land with planning permission granted for a two-storey, detached dwelling of over 167m².
Guide price: £295,000
Planning: East Cambridgeshire District Council 18/01268/OUT
Contact: Cheffins 01353 654900 ely@cheffins.co.uk
Plot ID: 137517

CHESHIRE

STOCKTON HEATH
Grantham Avenue
Land with full planning permission in place for a 242m² home.
Guide price: £495,000
Planning: Warrington Borough Council 2025/00014/FUL
Contact: Ashtons 01942 364446 ashton@ashtons.net
Plot ID: 137565

CORNWALL

BUDE
Old Drovers Way
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a modern three-bedroom dwelling and additional planning consent secured for a one-bedroom, cabin-style home.
Guide price: £165,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA23/04161
Contact: Kivells 01288 359999 bude@kivells.com
Plot ID: 137556

GORRAN

Trevarrick
A plot of land with planning permission granted for the erection of three, three- or four-bedroom contemporary homes.
Guide price: £550,000

Planning: Cornwall Council PA24/02684
Contact: Philip Martin 01872 242244 sales@philip-martin.co.uk
Plot ID: 137579

PERRANPORTH

Dunescape
A gated development of just seven custom build homes, each with uninterrupted sea and sunset views. Buyers can choose from three architect-designed house types by award-winning KAST Architects.
Guide price: £975,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA24/05890
Contact: Private seller 07426 595697 rupert@net-zero-living.co.uk
Plot ID: 137623

TREWENNACK

Trellill
A building plot with extant planning permission for a three-bedroom, three-storey detached property.
Guide price: £195,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA21/12447
Contact: Lodge & Thomas Chartered Surveyors 01872 272722 property@lodgeandthomas.co.uk
Plot ID: 137581

WAVERFORD

St Breok
Rural plot with conditional consent for the erection of a three-bedroom dormer-style house.
Guide price: £240,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA24/01289
Contact: Cole Rayment & White 01208 813595 wadebridge@crw.co.uk
Plot ID: 137578

CHESHIRE



BUERTON

Windmill Road
A semi-rural plot with detailed consent for a three-bedroom detached home and single garage.
Guide price: £125,000

Planning: Cheshire East Council 23/2574N
Contact: James Du Pavey 01270 445678 nantwich@jamesdupavey.co.uk
Plot ID: 137608

DEVON

BIDEFORD

Fairy Cross

Plot of land with full planning permission for three detached dwellings, set in a peaceful hamlet.

Guide price: £500,000

Planning: Torridge District Council 1/0823/2024/REM

Contact: Stags 01237 425030
bideford@stags.co.uk

Plot ID: 137554

COLLUMPTON

Stoneyford

A plot with consent for an architect-designed, three-bedroom home.

Guide price: £105,000

Planning: Mid Devon District Council 22/01579/arm

Contact: Acorus Rural Property Services 01284 753271 leanne.jeffreys@acorus.co.uk

Plot ID: 137589

ILFRACOMBE

Cairn Road

A single building plot measuring 0.14 acres with planning permission for a four-bedroom detached property.

Guide price: £125,000

Planning: North Devon Council 73513

Contact: Webbers 01271 863091
ilfracombe@webbers.co.uk

Plot ID: 137541

MORETONHAMPSTEAD

Lime Street

A pair of 0.13-acre plots with full detailed planning consent secured for a four-bedroom house on each.

Guide price: £250,000

Planning: Dartmoor National Park 0630/21

Contact: Kitchener Land and Planning 01392 879300
alex@klp.land

Plot ID: 137606

UGBOROUGH

Lutterburn Street

One of seven plots with planning permission for a detached dwelling.

Guide price: £225,000

Planning: South Hams District Council 3460/17/OPA

Contact: Stags 01803 865454 totnes@stags.co.uk

Plot ID: 137535

WEST DOWN

West Hill

One of three rural building sites with planning permission granted for a 300m² home on each plot.

Guide price: £450,000

Planning: North Devon Council 79553

Contact: Phillips Smith & Dunn 01271 327878
michael@phillipsland.com

Plot ID: 137564

DORSET

HARMANS CROSS

Valley Road

Land with full planning consent in place for a three-bedroom property.

Guide price: £450,000

Planning: Purbeck District Council P/FUL/2022/06807

Contact: Domvs 01929 555300
wareham@domvs.co.uk

Plot ID: 137612

EAST SUSSEX

MARESFIELD

London Road

A 0.24-acre plot with planning permission for a five- to six-bedroom detached home of around 307m².

Guide price: £440,000

Planning: Wealden District Council WD/2021/3120/O

Contact: Game Estate Agents 01206 384810
mersea@game-estates.co.uk

Plot ID: 137550

DEVON



AWLISCOMBE

Marles Close

Land with full planning permission for a three-bedroom, dormer-style home with open countryside views.

Guide price: £175,000

Planning: East Devon District Council 24/0556/FUL

Contact: Kitchener Land and Planning 01392 879300
sales@klp.land

Plot ID: 137604

ESSEX

CANVEY ISLAND

Eastfield Road

A coastal plot with full consent for an ultra-modern three-bedroom house.

Guide price: £160,000

Planning: Castle Point Borough Council 23/0045/FUL

Contact: Anthony Quirk 01268 511311 canvey@anthonyquirk.com

Plot ID: 137598

GREAT EASTON

Dunmow Road

Plot with planning permission for a four-bedroom detached family home.

Guide price: £280,000

Planning: Uttlesford District Council UTT/24/0889/FUL

Contact: Beresfords - Land and New Homes 01245 447938
land@beresfords.co.uk

Plot ID: 137513

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

BARTON END

Grange Cottage

Plot with planning consent with an additional 5 acres. Consent allows for a four-bedroom home of 268m² with parking, garden and amenity space.

Guide price: £700,000

Planning: Stroud District Council S.24/0536/FUL

Contact: Private seller 07919 561982 clairemayne@yahoo.co.uk

Plot ID: 137515

CHELTENHAM

Clapton-On-The-Hill

Plot with planning consent for the demolition of existing dwellings and erection of a new detached home.

Guide price: £925,000

Planning: Cotswold District Council 25/00030/FUL

Contact: Tayler & Fletcher 01451 820913 bourton@taylorandfletcher.co.uk

Plot ID: 137615

CHELTENHAM

Shipton Oliffe

A 0.41-acre building plot with planning permission granted for a six-bedroom detached house.

Guide price: £675,000

Planning: Cotswold District Council 23/01477/FUL

Contact: Charles Lear 01242 222722 sales@charleslear.co.uk

Plot ID: 137613

CHEPSTOW

Brockweir Common

Plot of around 1.9 acres with planning permission granted to demolish the existing bungalow and construct a four-bedroom detached property.

Guide price: £650,000

Planning: Forest of Dean District Council P1333/18/FUL

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PLOT?

The perfect piece of land would be in a pleasant area, affordable and level, with easy access, good ground conditions and no planning issues or obstructions. The issue, of course, is that plot may not exist. Even the best sites require some compromise, so it's crucial to properly assess contenders to get as close as possible to your goals.

All the plots in our listings come with planning permission: either outline (a loose affirmation the site can be developed) or full (consent for a particular design). Beware of any site without current approval. Land is worth considerably more once consent has been granted, so if the deal looks too good to be true, it probably is.

Once you've spotted an opportunity, consider whether the type of house you want can be comfortably accommodated on the plot, and if the existing consent allows for it or could be amended to suit. If it's a yes to both, then the site is worth a bit more research.

Check for issues on the plot that could increase construction costs, make it difficult to get the right design for your needs, or affect the viability of a project. Some of the most notorious budget-busters include steep slopes, difficult access to services, or obstacles like overhead cables. Most issues are not insurmountable and, with good design, some can even be turned to your advantage.

From a planning perspective, check how long is left on the consent. If it is less than six months and you will need to redesign the house to suit your needs or sort out any planning conditions, this could be problematic.

If early investigations seem positive, then you can move on to a more in-depth appraisal of how suitable the site is. Consider access, ground conditions, drainage and legal matters. If you are unsure, seek professional advice. This might mean speaking to your local council. Our useful online resource www.self-build.co.uk/plot-checklist can help bring structure to this part of the assessment process.

ESSEX**PILGRIMS HATCH
Hatch Road**

Land with planning permission granted for the construction of a two-bedroom detached bungalow.
Guide price: £200,000

Planning: Brentwood Borough Council 24/01405/FUL
Contact: Balgores Hayes 01277 216800
sales@balgoreshayes.com
Plot ID: 137614

Contact: Roscoe Rogers & Knight 01600 772929 enquiries@roscoerogersandknight.co.uk
Plot ID: 137571

**DURSLEY
Hunger Hill**

Land for sale with planning consent granted for the construction of a three-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: Stroud District Council S.23/1604/FUL
Contact: Hunters 01453 542395
dursley@hunters.com
Plot ID: 137549

**FAIRFORD
London Road**

Plot of land with planning consent for the conversion of the existing building into a residential dwelling and the construction of four new properties.
Guide price: £750,000
Planning: Cotswold District Council 23/01048/FUL
Contact: Perry Bishop and Chambers 01285 646770 landanddevelopment@perrybishop.co.uk
Plot ID: 137552

**HAMPSHIRE
LOCKS HEATH**

5 Locks Road, Monterey Drive
Mature plot with a positive pre-application report. The plot is suitable for a two-storey, four-bedroom detached home with parking.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Fareham Borough Council Q/1650/23
Contact: Robinson Reade Ltd 01489 579009
parkgate@robinsonreade.co.uk
Plot ID: 137509

**HEREFORDSHIRE
HEREFORD
Plot 8 Church View, Swainshill**

Plot 8 measures 1,210m² and comes with outline planning permission for an oak frame house as part of a small community of nine homes.

Guide price: £255,000
Planning: Herefordshire Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Oakwrights 01432 353353
Enquiries@oakwrights.co.uk
Plot ID: 137624

**SYMONDS YAT
Meeks Well Lane**

Land for sale with planning permission in place for the construction of a three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £325,000
Planning: Herefordshire Council P241412/F
Contact: Hamilton Stiller 01989 563525 sales@hamiltonstiller.co.uk
Plot ID: 137620

**HERTFORDSHIRE
BERKHAMSTED
Abbeydawn Rise**

One of two plots, plot one has consent for a four-bedroom home with ample garden space, a large terrace and three private parking bays. Buyers are able to customise the approved plans to suit their lifestyle, including the layout and build materials.
Guide price: £850,000
Planning: Dacorum Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Custom Build Homes 0345 223 4452
marketing@custombuildhomes.co.uk
Plot ID: 137593

**ISLE OF MAN
MAUGHOLD
Booilushag**

Single plot with full planning consent for the construction of a contemporary three-bedroom property.
Guide price: £232,500

Planning: Isle of Man Government 23/00854/B
Contact: Dean Wood 01624 620 606 info@deanwood.co.im
Plot ID: 137568

**KENT
SUTTON VALENCE
Chartway Road**

Plot with full planning permission for a four-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £375,000
Planning: Maidstone Borough Council 23/504535/full
Contact: Simon Miller & Company 01622 691255
maidstonesales@simonmiller.co.uk
Plot ID: 137582

**UPCHURCH
Land Gore Farm**

A 0.89-acre plot with planning permission for a modern three-bedroom home with off-road parking.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Swale Borough Council 24/500857/rem
Contact: Clive Emson Auctioneers 01622 608400
kent@cliveemson.co.uk
Plot ID: 137574

**LINCOLNSHIRE
HEALING**

Radcliffe Road
Site with outline planning permission for two, four-bedroom detached houses with detached double garages.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: North East Lincolnshire Council DM/0007/19/OUT
Contact: Crofts Estate Agents 01472 200666
sales@croftsestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 137590

**NORFOLK
ORMESBY ST MARGARET
Foster Close**

Land for sale with detailed planning permission for the construction of a four-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £180,000
Planning: Great Yarmouth Borough Council 06/23/0196/O
Contact: Bycroft Residential 01493 664000 residential@charlesbycroft.co.uk
Plot ID: 137563

**NORTH YORKSHIRE
SILSDEN**

Breakmoor Avenue
Single plot with detailed planning permission in place for a luxury, three-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £220,000
Planning: Bradford Metropolitan District Council 23/02369/FUL
Contact: Wilman & Lodge 01535 655212 silsden@wilman-lodge.co.uk
Plot ID: 137562

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
STAPLEFORD**

Brookhill Street
Plot of land with a bungalow and planning permission granted for the construction of four detached homes.
Guide price: £395,000
Planning: Broxtowe Borough Council 24/00375/FUL
Contact: Robert Ellis 0115 949 0044 stapleford@robertellis.co.uk
Plot ID: 137550

**TUXFORD
Lincoln Road**
Plot with consent for a pair of two-bedroom detached homes and one three-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Bassetlaw District Council 24/00874/out
Contact: William H Brown 01777 704248 Retford@williamhbrown.co.uk
Plot ID: 137585

LINCOLNSHIRE

**HORNCastle
Mareham Road**
Plot of around 0.36 acres with full planning permission for the construction of a large, four-bedroom detached house.

Guide price: £180,000
Planning: East Lindsey District Council S/086/01180/21
Contact: Connells 01476 590050
grantham@connells.co.uk
Plot ID: 137537

WELSH FARMHOUSE CONVERSION



LOCATION Rhydargaeau,
Carmarthenshire

GUIDE PRICES £795,000

AREA 33 acres

PLANNING Carmarthenshire
Council PL/00832

CONTACT Evans Bros 01570 422395
carmarthen@evansbros.co.uk

Plot ID: 137121

Set in rural Wales on the outskirts of Carmarthen, this 33-acre holding has planning consent for conversion into a residential dwelling.

Comprising a traditional farmhouse and a variety of modern livestock and general-purpose buildings, the rural site has full planning permission for the conversion of the farmhouse into a four-bedroom property, with spacious rooms throughout benefitting from mains electricity, private drainage and oil central heating.

Situated in a tucked away spot at the end of a no-through adopted single track highway with a drive leading into the farmyard, the plot enjoys panoramic countryside views. With some of the land suitable for cropping as well as grazing, a further 35 acres of land are also available by separate negotiation.

The location is convenient for the centre of Carmarthen, where a wide range of amenities can be found, including a train station with links to major cities, a regional hospital, two secondary schools, a leisure centre, cinema and shops.



1 The site is surrounded by countryside, offering views as far as the eye can see

2 The holding is tucked away at the end of a no-through road, providing a great degree of privacy

3 Consent allows for the conversion of the main stone building into a spacious four-bedroom property with uPVC double glazing and oil central heating

4 & 5 A variety of outbuildings are on site, including a former cow shed and chicken enclosures

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE



BLEASBY
The Walled Garden

A plot in the grounds of a listed building with consent for a modern and sustainable single-storey home.
Guide price: £275,000

Planning: Newark and Sherwood District Council 19/02166/FUL
Contact: Smith and Partners 01636 815544 sales@smithandpartners.co.uk
Plot ID: 137602

OXFORDSHIRE
BLEWBURY

Church Road

Plot of land with planning permission for the conversion of an existing barn into a split-level residential dwelling.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Vale of White Horse District Council P24/V0956/ful, P24/V0958/lb
Contact: Thomas Merrifield 01235 813777 didcot@thomasmerrifield.co.uk
Plot ID: 137591

BURCOT
Abingdon Road

Plot of land with planning permission granted for the construction of a four-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: South Oxfordshire District Council P25/S0604/O
Contact: Breckon & Breckon 01865 310300 summertown@breckon.co.uk
Plot ID: 137609

STANDLAKE, WITNEY
Plot 6, Oxford Meadow

A 0.2-acre serviced plot set within an exclusive development of 10 homes. Planning is approved for a five-bedroom home with a south-facing rear garden and a double garage with potential for conversion above.
Guide price: POA
Planning: West Oxfordshire District Council 17/00629/FUL
Contact: Private seller 01865 689100 customercare@oxfordhomes.org
Plot ID: 137540

SHROPSHIRE
ASTON BOTTERELL

Cart Barn
Plot with full consent to convert and

extend a traditional stone and brick barn into a detached two- to three-bedroom home and detached garage
Guide price: £180,000
Planning: Shropshire Council 18/03850/FUL
Contact: Private seller 07598 817626 richardgeorge1234@gmail.com
Plot ID: 137567

NEWPORT
Chetwynd aston, near Gilbert's Horse

A 1.7-acre plot with full planning permission for a single-storey, four-bedroom house with stunning views.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Telford & Wrekin Council TWC/2024/0460
Contact: Private seller 07855 181725 wendeeshine@hotmail.com
Plot ID: 137566

SOMERSET
COMBE ST NICHOLAS
Pole Rue Lane

A 0.5-acre plot with planning permission in place for a large replacement home of around 224m².
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Somerset Council 24/00699/FUL
Contact: Private seller 07764 968568 mail@poleruefarm.co.uk
Plot ID: 137605

SHEPTON MALLET
Evercreech

Plot with planning permission granted for a two-bedroom eco dwelling.
Guide price: £170,000
Planning: Somerset Council 2021/0063/FUL
Contact: Allen Heritage 020 8656 2525 luke@allenheritage.co.uk
Plot ID: 137569

SOUTH YORKSHIRE
LOXLEY

Studfield Drive
Two plots available with planning permission for a four-bedroom detached house on each.
Guide price: £325,000
Planning: Sheffield City Council 23/03090/OUT
Contact: Banner Cross 0114 268 3241 bannercross@saxtonmee.co.uk
Plot ID: 137514

STAFFORDSHIRE
ECCLESHALL

Walk Mill
Land with consent for the conversion of an existing barn into a single home.
Guide price: £250,000
Planning: Stafford Borough Council 06/06218/ful
Contact: Edge Goodrich 01785 850222 property@edgegoodrich.co.uk
Plot ID: 137618

LEEK
Thorncliffe
3.97 acres with consent for the residential development of a set of former World War II buildings. Plans allow for a three-bedroom home.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: Staffordshire Moorlands District Council SMDC/2021/0664
Contact: Private seller 07484 839238
Plot ID: 137600

SUFFOLK
STONHAM ASPAL
The Street

Four plots with planning permission granted for the construction of a detached home on each.
Guide price: £600,000
Planning: Mid Suffolk District Council DC/24/00201

Contact: Minors & Brady 01502 447788 lowestoft@minorsandbrady.co.uk
Plot ID: 137619

SURREY
BOOKHAM

Plot 2, The Paddocks
Set in 6 acres, a serviced plot on an exclusive development of nine custom build bungalows. This plot comes with a passport for a Dan-Wood house bungalow of circa 121m².
Guide price: POA
Planning: Mole Valley District Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Private seller info@custombuildplots.ltd
Plot ID: 137638

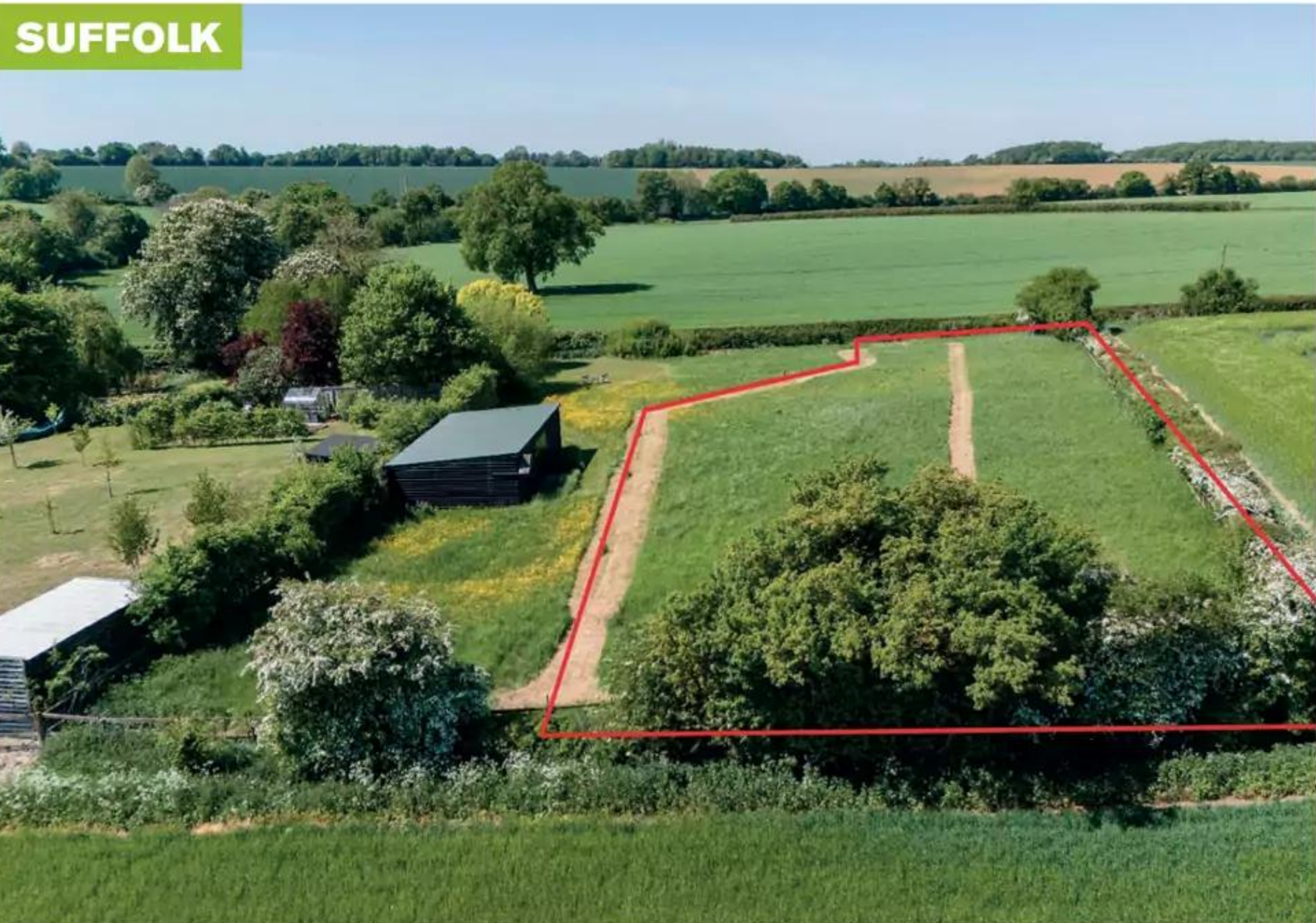
WARWICKSHIRE
GAYDON

Kineton Road
Land with planning consent in place for the erection of a detached four-bedroom home of around 345m².
Guide price: £300,000
Planning: Stratford-on-Avon District Council 24/00091/VARY
Contact: Sheldon Bosley Knight 01789 292310 stratford@sheldonbosleyknight.co.uk
Plot ID: 137588

WEST SUSSEX
SIDLESHAM

Ham Road
Plot of land with planning permission for the conversion of an existing barn into a four-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: £975,000
Planning: Chichester District Council 25/00543/FUL, 23/02189/PA3Q
Contact: Stride & Son 01243 782626 properties@strideandson.co.uk
Plot ID: 137587

SUFFOLK



HITCHAM
Bury Road
A 0.5-acre rural plot with full planning consent for a substantial single-storey, four-bedroom home.
Guide price: £350,000

Planning: Babergh District Council DC/22/04781
Contact: Chapman Stickels 01473 372372 info@chapmanstickels.co.uk
Plot ID: 137551



WILTSHIRE

STANDERWICK
Palmers Farm

A 0.89-acre plot with full planning permission granted for a modern, four-bedroom family home with rolling countryside views.

Guide price: £525,000
Planning: Mendip District Council 2023/0355/FUL
Contact: Hunter French 01373 464040 frome@hunterfrench.co.uk
Plot ID: 137539

WEST YORKSHIRE

LEEDS

Gledhow Lane

Plot with planning permission for a single-storey, 280m² four-bed home.

Guide price: £500,000

Planning: Leeds City Council 24/04119/FU

Contact: Monroe Estate Agents 01937 205456 bostonspa@monroeestateagents.com
Plot ID: 137610

SHADWELL

Park Lane Court

Plot with consent for a five-bedroom detached property of over 372m².

Guide price: £775,000

Planning: Leeds City Council 23/06969/fu

Contact: Monroe Estate Agents 01937 205456 bostonspa@monroeestateagents.com
Plot ID: 137611

WILTSHIRE

GREAT CHEVERELL

High Street

Single plot with planning permission for the erection of a four-bedroom home and a five-bedroom home.

Guide price: £400,000

Planning: Wiltshire Council PI/2024/09776

Contact: Strakers 01380 723451 devizes@strakers.co.uk
Plot ID: 137617

WORCESTERSHIRE

UPTON UPON SEVERN

Holly Green

Land with planning permission for three detached, two-storey houses and a detached bungalow.

Guide price: £700,000

Planning: Malvern Hills District Council 15/00617/out
Contact: John Goodwin

01684 892809
malvern@johngoodwin.co.uk
Plot ID: 137518

SCOTLAND

ABERDEENSHIRE

ABERDEEN

Bridge of Don

Plot with full planning permission for a detached home of around 200m².

Guide price: £130,000

Planning: Aberdeen City Council 231141/DPP

Contact: McEwan Fraser Legal 0131 524 9797 mandy.taylor@mcewanfraserlegal.co.uk
Plot ID: 137546

BANFF

Plot 2 of Ladysbridge

A 0.26-acre with planning permission for a five-bedroom detached property.

Guide price: £85,000

Planning: Aberdeenshire Council app/2023/1757

Contact: Stewart & Watson 01261 818883 banff.property@stewartwatson.co.uk
Plot ID: 137529

ARGYLL AND BUTE

APPIN

Plot 3 of Tynribbie

Rural plot of land of around 0.26 acres with planning permission for a four-bedroom detached home.

Guide price: £85,000

Planning: Argyll and Bute Council 14/01543/PP

Contact: Fiuran Property 07872 986164 info@fiuran.co.uk
Plot ID: 137516

ARCHARACLE

Kentra

Plot measuring 0.45 acres with

planning consent for the construction of a three-bedroom house.

Guide price: £90,000

Planning: Highland Council 24/04760/FUL

Contact: Fiuran Property 07872 986164 info@fiuran.co.uk

Plot ID: 137596

FORT WILLIAM

Inchree

Three plots with consent granted for a three-bedroom detached property on each with panoramic sea views.

Guide price: £90,000

Planning: Highland Council 23/03511/FUL

Contact: Fiuran Property 07872 986164 info@fiuran.co.uk

Plot ID: 137583

TARBET

Barfad Brae

Plot with consent for a detached home of up to five bedrooms.

Guide price: £170,000

Planning: Argyll and Bute Council 22/00796/PP

Contact: Galbraith 01786 434600 stirling@galbraithgroup.com

Plot ID: 137597

HIGHLAND

ARDGAY

Bonar Bridge

Land with planning permission for a five-bedroom detached dwelling.

Guide price: £180,000

Planning: Highland Council 22/03104/fu

Contact: Yopa 01322 584475 hello@yopa.co.uk

Plot ID: 137584

SCOTTISH BORDERS

YETHOLM

Plot 1, Venchen Farm Cottages

An elevated building plot measuring around 0.7 acres and an adjacent portion of grassland of around 0.75 acres, which is intended to be the new property's garden. The plot is large enough for the installation of an efficient ground source heat pump.

Guide price: £160,000

Planning: Scottish Borders Council 23/01709/PPP

Contact: Private seller 01289 382602 rharrison@horncliffemill.com

Plot ID: 137532

WALES

CARMARTHENSHIRE

MEIDRIM

Plasydderwen

Various sized plots are available with planning consent granted for the construction of energy-efficient four-bedroom homes with fine views.

Guide price: £120,000

Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council Refer to agent

Contact: Clee Tompkinson Francis 01267 230645 carmarthen@ctf-uk.com

Plot ID: 137524

GLAMORGAN

GWAUN CAE GURWEN

New Road

Single plot with planning permission for the construction of a single home.

Guide price: £70,000

Planning: Neath Port Talbot Council P2024/0160

Contact: Calow Evans 01269 543128 ammanford@calowevans.co.uk

Plot ID: 137536

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In Focus

Smart Homes

Well planned and installed home tech can deliver a better living experience, greater convenience and improved energy efficiency – plus it can simplify the wiring and fit-out phases of a project

If the words 'smart home' conjure up visions of smart speakers, multiple phone apps and remotes going missing down the sofa, then fear not! A true smart home is one that integrates seamlessly into your lifestyle, supporting and improving the way you interact with your house, and – crucially – is tailored to your budget, project brief and long-term goals.

There are many advantages to making the switch from traditional to smart electrics. The key is to plan for this from the start of your project, so that – even if you don't add all the bells and whistles right now – you know the infrastructure is there to readily plug into in future.

Benefits of smarter homes

A high-quality connected home can control everything from heating and lighting, through to security, ventilation, cooling, audio-visual and more. It could be hard-wired or make use of wireless technology. Either way, you'll want to work with specialists who take the time to understand your objectives and deliver an intuitive system that delivers on your wishlist, is satisfying to use and adds some lifestyle-enhancing features you didn't even realise could be yours. Here are just a few of the ways you can benefit:

Create the perfect indoor climate: intelligently team heating, ventilation and cooling solutions to optimise comfort levels – even pre-warming or cooling the house when you're on the way home from work!

Set lighting moods at the touch of a button – with far fewer wall switches than in a traditionally-wired house.

Enhance security and convenience – bolster your home's defences with video doorbells, keyless entry, motion-sensing cameras, door and window sensors etc.

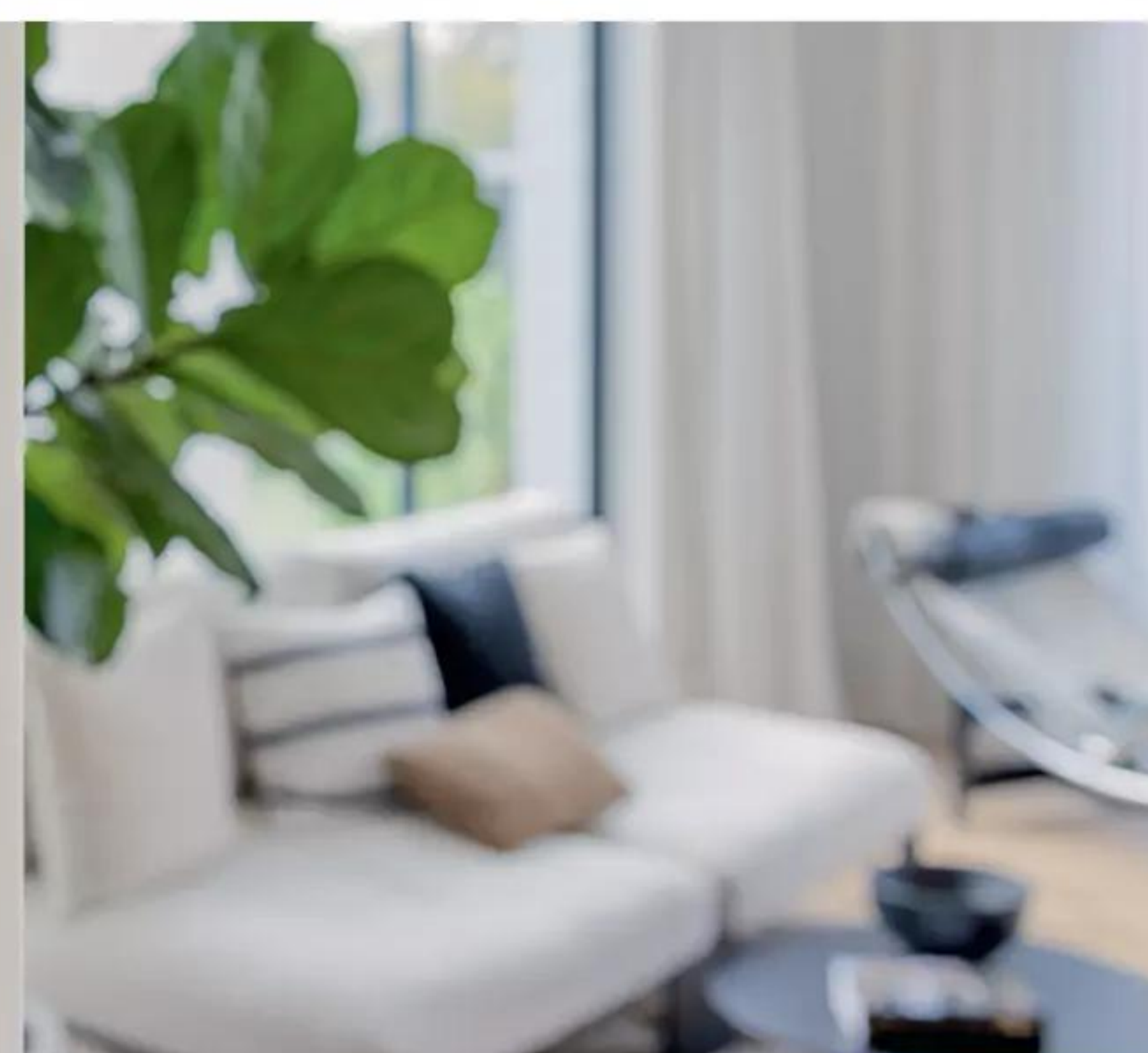
Make your home more accessible – one of the biggest benefits of smart tech is that, by automating functions and offering more interface options (switches, apps, voice control etc), it enables greater inclusivity.

Whether you want an entry-level whole-house setup, an all-singing, all-dancing home cinema or something in between, the products, suppliers and installers highlighted over these next few pages are a great place to start planning for a smarter way of living.

Top: Theben offers hardwired and wireless infrastructure solutions, based on the open KNX protocol for enhanced compatibility. Its LUXORLiving Smart Start room controller offers switching, dimming, room climate control and blind control (luxorliving.co.uk)

Middle: Gartec's Artico HomeLift Compact won Best Home Technology Product at the Build It Awards 2024. The £18,500 starting price makes it a credible option for people with mobility limitations to stay in their homes for longer, rather than having to move (gartec.com)

Bottom: A contemporary twist on traditional Bakelite switches, the Niko Toggle can provide centralised control of lighting, heating and ventilation as part of a Niko Smart Home setup. An optional, hidden-until-lit LED feedback provides a soft warm glow around the toggle to indicate whether the switch is on or off (homecontrol.uk.com)





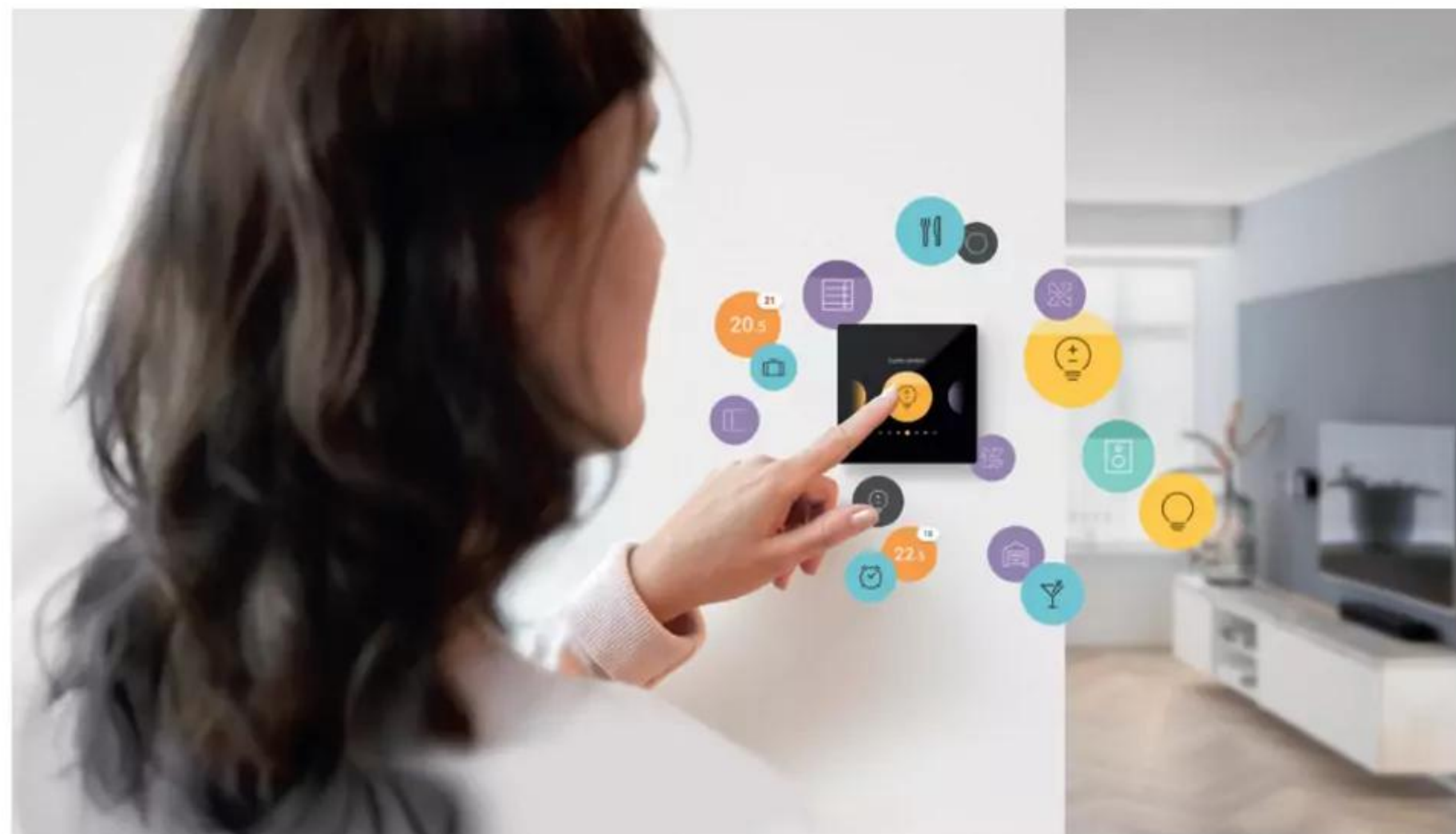
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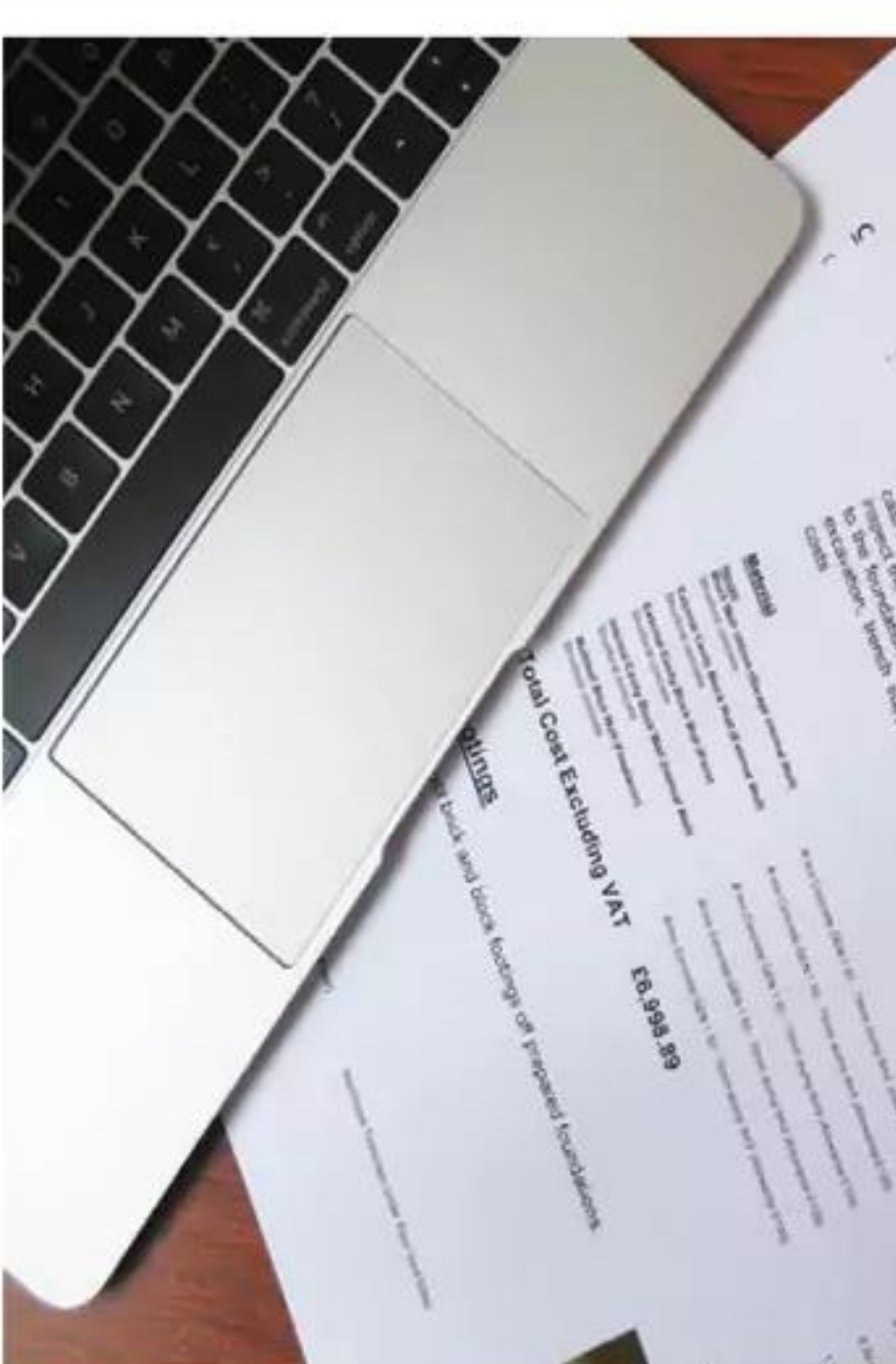


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Tel: 020 8874 2234 **Web:** www.mr-resistor.co.uk/controls/wise-controls



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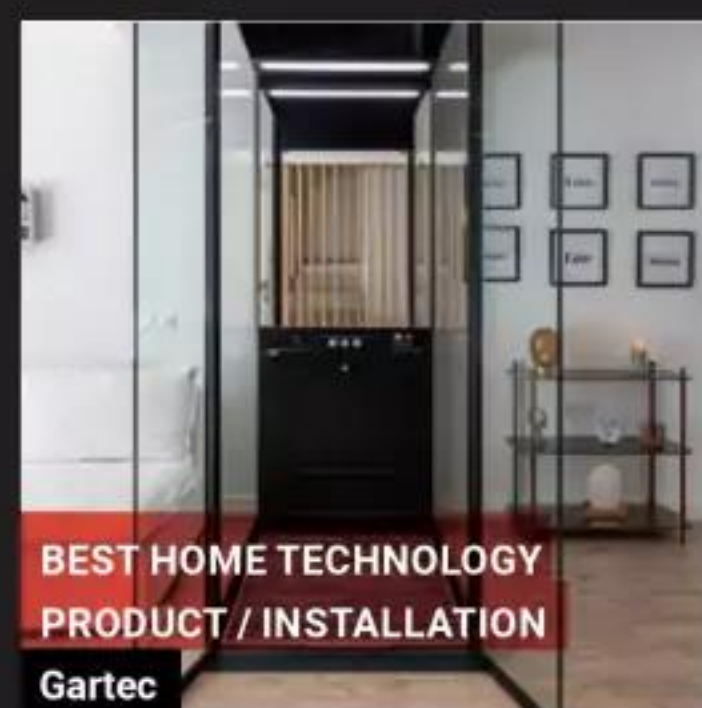
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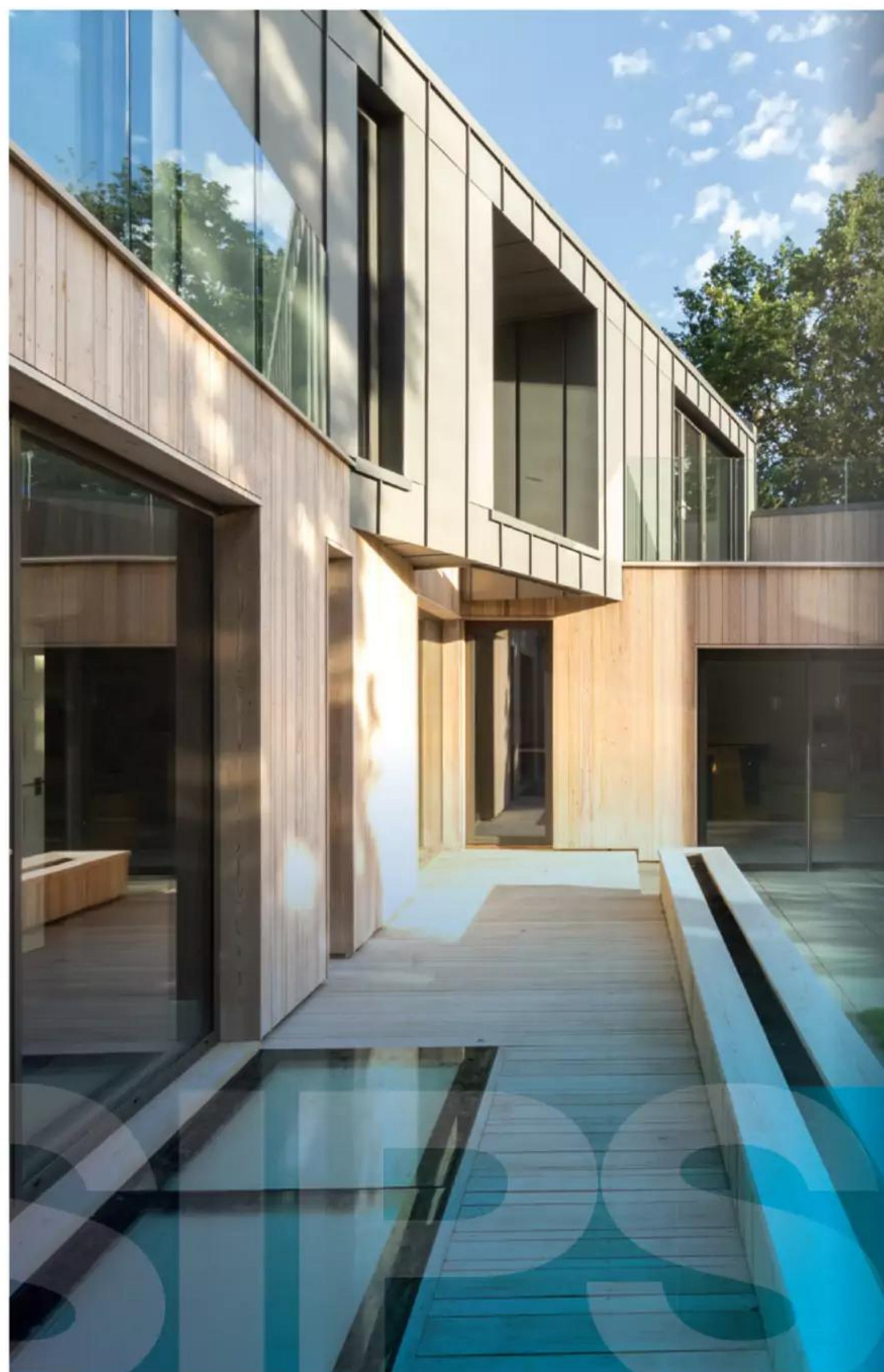


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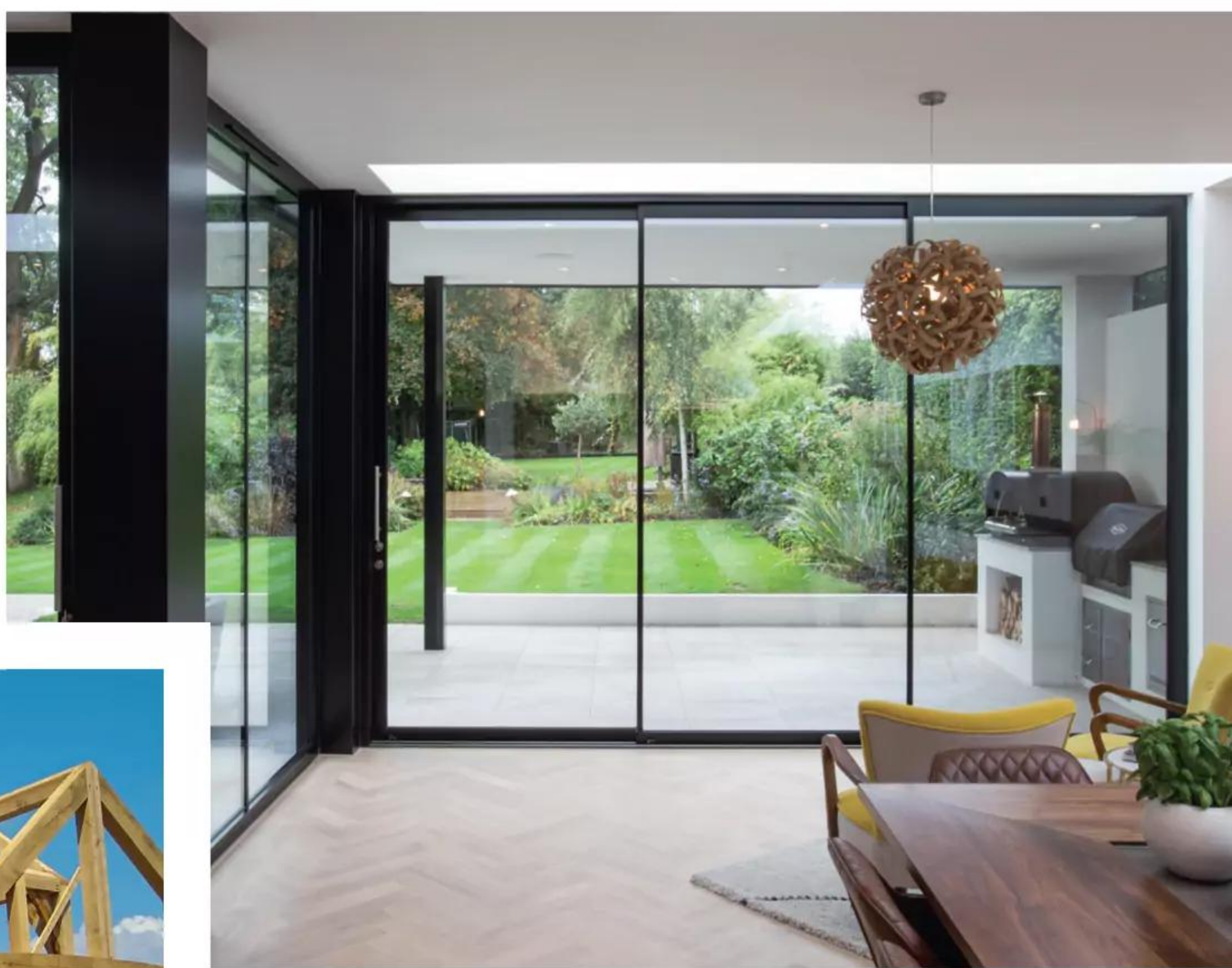
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ARCHITECT'S VIEW



James Brindley, founder and director of Design Haus Architecture, looks at the key considerations for designing a futureproof self build

Creating a long-lasting home

Why should futureproofing be on self builders' radars?

Creating a lifelong home is important because people's needs and technology are always changing. We've worked with a lot of repeat clients, and it's always interesting to see how the way they use their homes evolves. Sometimes it's because their kids are growing up, or they've started working from home, or they just want to make the most of the space now they've got a bit more disposable income. Designing with the future in mind means their home can grow with them, rather than needing bigger changes down the line.

What are some key architectural elements to include?

When designing for the future, one of the key principles to think about is flexibility; creating spaces that can adapt as life changes. That translates into features like open-plan areas with multiple layout options, multifunctional rooms and plenty of storage.

We recently designed a home for a young family and included a ground-floor room with its own entrance and ensuite. Right now, it's a home office, but there are plans for it to become a space for their children as they grow up, or even accommodation for an elderly relative in the future. Designing for adaptability from the outset means the home can continue to meet your needs for years to come.

Futureproofing isn't about second-guessing what might happen. It's about making thoughtful decisions now that keep your options open later. Good design should feel effortless, but behind the scenes, it's doing a lot of heavy lifting to make life easier as things change.

What should self builders prioritise in terms of insulation, heating and ventilation systems to ensure longevity?

Firstly, it's about getting the building fabric right: high-performance insulation, triple glazing and good levels of airtightness all make a difference to energy efficiency. Then it's about adding in systems that are low-maintenance, and ready for the future, such as underfloor heating powered by an air source heat pump, and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery to keep air fresh without losing warmth.

Is it worth aiming for net-zero or Passivhaus standards?

Both are ambitious but genuinely worthwhile goals. They do take careful planning and a higher upfront investment, but the long-term benefits, lower energy bills, improved comfort and reduced environmental footprint can be significant. That said, it's important to approach each project with balance. Not every site, budget or brief will allow for full Passivhaus certification, but applying the core principles – good airtightness, high insulation levels and passive solar design – can make a big difference to a home's overall performance.



This new home by Design Haus Architecture respects the building's historic site and fulfills the owner's needs now and in the future. Ancillary areas, such as the utility, boot room and cloakroom, were positioned for more practical usage and all the internal rooms offer level access

Is it more expensive to put in futureproofing features?

It can sometimes seem like a bigger investment initially, especially when it comes to insulation, glazing or renewable technologies. But for me, the real value often comes from the thinking behind it.

While some materials do have higher upfront costs, a lot of futureproofing simply comes down to smart planning, taking the time to think carefully about how you'll use the house, both now and as your family's needs change. That bit of foresight can save a huge amount of time, cost and disruption later on.

Can adding smart tech be beneficial?

When it comes to technology, the key is getting the infrastructure in place early on. Even if clients don't want to invest in the full smart home setup straight away, it's worth wiring for things like electric vehicle chargers, solar panels or home automation systems from the start. That way, it's much easier (and cheaper) to add them in later.

We often suggest smart heating controls, lighting systems or security setups, not just for convenience, but because they improve how a home works day-to-day. A lot of our clients now control most of their home from their phone. One system we've worked on includes motion sensors under the beds that trigger a soft light to guide people to the bathroom at night. It's those small, considered touches that make the difference and because we planned for it early on, there was no disruption when they wanted to add it in.

How can a design accommodate future expansion?

Even if someone isn't ready to build an extension or loft conversion straight away, we can still design with that in mind. That might mean orienting the layout to leave room for a future extension, making sure the roof pitch and structure can support conversion works, or planning services like drainage so they don't need to be moved later.

We've worked on a lot of projects where we design the full vision for the house from the start, then break it down into phases the client can tackle over a number of years. That way, even if the budget or timeline doesn't allow for everything right away, we're always working toward the end goal. It saves time, cost and stress later and means every decision made early on still supports where the project is going.

James Brindley is the founder of Design Haus, an award-winning RIBA chartered architectural practice based in Nottinghamshire. He is a seasoned architect with over 20 years of industry experience and is accredited with both the Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA) and the British Institute of Interior Design (BIID). For more information call **01156 788917** or visit **www.designhausarchitecture.co.uk**



So glad we were introduced to the NSBRC - it has proved to be an invaluable source of knowledge, information & inspiration from trades, experts & fellow self builders. We have been twice & will definitely be back! — April 2023 * * * *

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